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A SEASIDE STORY

AND OTHER POEMS.

A SEASIDE STORY

AND OTHER POEMS.

Cambridge:
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A

SEASIDE STORY

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY
ELIZABETH HORSLEY WHITEMAN,
AUTHOR OF "SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS."



LONDON:
BELL AND DALDY, YORK STREET,
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1870.

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Dedication.

TO MY FATHER.



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A Seaside Story.

PART I.



FALLING tide—Above the hissing wave
A belt of shingle glittered, and the wrack
Fringing the cliff shewed every bead full
blown,

Dripping and yellow 'neath the autumn sun.
And slowly one by one the scattered rocks
Upreared them; some like monsters of the sea
Heaving their uncouth sides from out the brine,
And some like swarthy divers who have sprung
Back to the upper world with panting breath,
And streaming, tangled locks. Thousands of pearls
Were flung by every wave upon the shore,
Myriads of diamonds flashed as each withdrew,
Bowing and crouching, mingling with a crowd
That still pressed on with brows uplifted, hands

Stretched out in homage, and with voices loud
Chanting their acclamations.

So it seems
To eyes of yonder boy, he, 'neath the rock,
Lies 'mid the splintered drift-wood and the shells
Broken and bleached by many a summer sun ;
And from the lengthening shadow of his nook
He sees the milky foam rush up and spread
Along the beach, and th' innumerable
Flash of the streams that quiver o'er the stones
With each retreating wave. Sees this and sees
More sights than meet the eye.

Oh blessèd eyes
Of childhood ! when the earth is full of dreams,
When angel wings are seen in summer clouds
And fairy shapes are lurking in the bells
Of hedgerow flowers, and heaven is visible,
Tho' but its floor, in the blue starlit sky.
When time and place no separation make,
And written tales are all realities ;
For them crusaders march across the hill
That rises by yon hazel copse, and halt
And gaze thro' mist upon the neighbouring town
That is as if Jerusalem ;—for them

A rushy island in a moorland pool,
The haunt of ruff and reeve and dragon-flies,
Is shipwrecked Crusoe's home where solitude
Reigns awfully. For them too Moses sleeps,
A babe among the flags and lily cups,
Beside the streamlet that divides the fields
Not a mile off; and tribes of Israel make
Their wanderings thro' weary years along
The sandy strip of waste that lies hard by,
And every trailing cloud above that waste,
Lit with the flames of sunset, is for them
The fiery car that bore the prophet home.
Aye, and the footsteps coming thro' the corn,
Footsteps divine, they do not doubt have passed
Thro' such fields as their own, where thrushes sing
And poppies bloom and fall.

Now dreams the boy,
His brain replete with wondrous Eastern tales
But newly read, a thousand fantasies;
Beholding, in the glowing sandstone cliffs,
A throne of gold and sardian, all enriched
With clustered emeralds, its lower steps,—
Where grew the purple sea-weeds,—porphyry.
And for the time the blue, bright August sky

Is a great canopy of Tyrian woof
Broidered with silver, and the circling birds
Are magic ministrants who ever move
In cabalistic figures, while below,
Bow to the golden floor, the thronging waves
Their brows, as slaves bringing rich tribute in
Of gems from fairy caverns. So to-day!—
Another day the strong green billows rise
Before him as a chain of snow-browed hills,
White avalanches thundering down their sides,
And with their crash is heard a human wail
Of desolation.

Hark! there is a call;
The dreamer starts and throws his book aside,
And like the April sunbeam which an hour
Has slumbered in a golden mist, breaks forth
And with the wakening breezes seems to fly
Across the meadows merrily; so he
Springs into keen activity, and leaps
Over the shingle and from rock to rock,
Where laver, shining green, gives treacherous hold
To one less sure of foot. His comrade stands
Out on a shelving reef, left by the ebb
Jagged and bare. They stoop above a pool

Held in a rocky bowl, a fairy world
Where, amid delicate growth of feathered fronds,
Crimson and amber, blossom breathing flowers
Of ocean, sea anemones. The sun
Struck downward on their water home and sent
Quivering belts of paler light to streak
The seamèd rock; some orange-tinted glowed
Like a ripe apricot that opened tells
How it has drawn the sunset to its heart;
Some rosy as a babe's foot, some were set
With turquoise blue, large as the missing gem
Which Shylock mourned for when his daughter fled.

Then, gazing downward breathless, Evan Clare
Began to gather back his broken dreams,
And the still being of that new found world
Broadened his eye that but a moment back
Flashed, like a sharp-cut sapphire. But the boy
Beside him, Leonard Williams, dashed his hand
Down thro' the water, crying out, "Ahoy!
My beauties!" And forthwith the open lips
Of all the sea-flowers folded, and like stones
Lifeless, unshaped, they lay beneath the race
Of glittering bubbles whistling to the brim,

And the slow waving of the lacing weeds.
"Now to the glen," he said, "and let us hunt
The rabbits from their burrows there!"

So back

Across the ever-widening sands they hied,
And thro' a rugged chasm in the hills,
Following up the pathway of a stream
That met them running seaward. Overhead
A tribe of martins left their sandy homes
And summer broods, and scudded up and down;
And out of every growth of fern that spread
A plume of feathers, or a group of blades
Shining like scimitars, brown ears erect,
White-tufted tails innumerable sprung
At Leonard's shouts.

No dreamer he, his eye
Quick as a gleaner's, scanning far and near,
Was not the outlook of a soul that linked
The seen with the unseen. The rock above,
Yellow in sunlight, purple in the shade,
With beautiful embroidery of leaves,
Briar and ivy climbing down to meet
The ocean weeds; the rolling, sunny sea
Of hue as changeful as a pigeon's breast,

White sails seen in the offing, lingering clouds
And the sharp curves of sea-gulls' flapping wings,
Were fair to him and were a joy to him
Just for their own true selves. Out on the moor
He was the first to see the curlews fly,
A dusky band, at turning of the tide,
To patter on the shining sands and feed,
Dipping their long bills in the pools. He knew
Where grew the sundew and the flowering fern,
And marked the yaffel laughing in the sun,
Because the rain was coming, or the flight
Of restless plovers hurrying to and fro
Between the fields' brown furrows and the shore,
And though the sky was clear could so forbode
The coming tempest.

Both were sailors' sons,
Leonard and Evan, both were fatherless.
The errant spirit of a sailor each
Held by inheritance, and the fearless love
Of enterprise that swept each separate thought
Of danger, toil, privation, by its light,
Into one shade. Who marks the stony road
Cloud-shadowed close at hand when golden gleams
Lie on untrodden fields? The seaman's son,

Leonard, beheld himself on quarter deck,
And master of a vessel. Evan longed
To follow in his father's steps, and dreamed
Of a fair ship with plumage like a swan,
That he should guide by word of his command
As star along its orbit. Dear they held
A day now fast approaching when no more
Their feet should tread the highways and the lanes,
Meadows and moors, but the great water plain,
The ocean prairie, should before them lie
With all its unnamed roads.

O fair life, free !

And fair such hope to one like Evan born
And reared within a city. Eldest he
Of three, co-heirs not of broad lands or gold,
But work, and the true love of work that makes
The need of it a blessing. Lonely as a rose,
First of the garden, which the sun of May
Deserting leaves to bloom beneath grey skies,
Such was his mother,—widowed in her youth,
Yet faithful to her day, and using all
The brightness and the sweetness of a heart
That seemed for sunshine born, to grace the gloom
Whence light and shadow fled. Evan had learnt

To love her with a love beyond his years,
A comprehension of her past which he
By age alone could share, while at her feet
His baby brothers played. And she could share
His future, loving to repeat the tales
Which both remembered set to deeper tones,
And mingled oft with laughter in the space
She filled with sighs. Sea-shells and coral were
The playthings of his childhood, and she hung
His nursery-walls with pictured flags and charts
And vessels in full sail; and many an eve
She met him on his homeward way from school,
And lingered with him on the bridge that spans
The mighty Thames, and watched from chime to
chime

Beneath the Minster towers the barges glide,
And with the swelling tide the black masts rock
Against the sunset. Waking with the light
Of the rather summer dawn, with unclosed eyes
Evan would listen to the gathering sounds
Of wheels that had but lulled an hour or two
In neighbouring streets, and make his fancy dream
It was the landward tide, "the call o' the sea,"
As fishers name the rolling clang of waves

When storms are brewing.

But such dreams at last
Failed to refresh the soul that pined within ;
So when the pale cheek for a moment glowed
With words of praise won hardly, when the book,
The prize of studious weeks, was homeward borne ;
When the great city market teemed with fruits
And the streets echoed with the vendors' cries ;
When dusty jessamine on sun-baked walls
Along the squares had dropped their thirsty flowers,
And from the balconies the mignonette
Stretched its lank stalks, thick strung with bells
of green,
And ruby-blossomed stocks drooped on the stems
That curved with ripening seed, they all set forth,
The mother and her boy and little ones,
And sought a fishing village in the south,
With houses nestling up and down the hills,
And boats in coveys brooding on the sea.
And there for happy weeks they lived and breathed
The scented sea-wind ; making then their home
A gabled house whose roof and walls, bedecked
With Virgin creeper glossy green in June,
Flame-leaved in autumn, rose a space above

The straggling village street, flanked by a hill
Where sheep went browsing thro' the yellow whin
Up to the churchyard gate.

Beneath that roof
Had Leonard lived his fourteen years; and one,
Kinswoman of his mother, whom he called
Aunt Ruth, had watched over his orphaned life
With almost mother's love. She, years gone by,
A tenant's daughter on the lands the Clares
Had held for generations in the north,
Passed her untroubled youth. Then trouble came,
And as a change of wind in summer-time
Darkens the sky, draws mist o'er fair blue hills,
And chills the blood, the aspect of her life
Was changed for her; loss and bereavement
came,

And Ruth, an orphan of the past, was left
With no bright future born to her.

Awhile
She filled a place of service to the Clares;
Service of love repaid with love again,
And not alone with gold. Love goes unpaid
On earth how often, for its price is love!
And jewels, gold, high honour, deep esteem,

Leave her unpaid, and standing evermore
A creditor beside the door or grave.

There year by year she watched the brides
go forth,
The daughters of the house, the brides brought in
To be new daughters ; and when wedding-bells
Were still, she heard the children's voices bring
Their notes to make a chime as sweet as bells.
Glad with the glad ! altho' for her no chime
Should ring out tidings, setting her life's tale
To a new tune, no children's laugh for her
Drop downward thro' an octave. 'Crossed in love'
A common saying and a common fate,
Yet never said of her because her tongue
Dealt in cold envious words when other lives
Shone in the light, her light being changed to shade ;
Nor in detraction woman's poisoned breath
That breathes a dulness on the lustrous worth
Of a queen's jewels, and would fain suggest
A worm is hiding in the folded leaf
That wraps the lily buds.

Rivers there are,
And love is such an one, that being checked

By some stern barrier in their single course,
Break to a score of streams, and give their wealth
Of waters to a thousand fields, nor fall
Short of their bourne, the sea, the infinite,
Where all their currents may unite. So Ruth
Not like the Ruth of old finding new love
Where least she looked for it; a broken troth
Being all the guerdon of her patient years,
A selfish heart that opened to the sun
Of her prosperity but closed when clouds
Obscured it, as th' inconstant marigold;
So Ruth gave all her unclaimed wealth of love
A thousand ways: and when one dying wrote,
A cousin whom in childhood she had called
A sister, lacking one herself, and prayed
That she would be a mother to her boy
Soon to be orphaned, with one parent laid
Beneath the sea-wave, one beneath the turf,
She took the charge with joy.—A home was left
To her and Leonard; hard won fruit of toil
And separation, haunted by fair hopes
Never on earth fulfilled.

This year it chanced
That Evan's mother, summoned to the north

To tend her husband's aged father, made
Brief stay beside the sea she loved, and left
Her boy with one most true to any trust ;
Thankful his long, lithe limbs should vigour win
From wave and wind and sun ; thankful his mind
Should commune hold with her whose life, not lips,
Spake hourly of her God ; who held His will
To be revealed in every accident
Of daily life, and not to be received
With a less reverence than His commands
Uttered with trumpet voice of old ; who deemed
That "the white lily of a blameless life"
For man or maiden, might uplift its stem
And bloom in cottage gardens.

Fast the earth
Was wheeling new lands into light, our land
To evening shadows when the boys returned ;
Sauntering silent save when one or both
Would carol loud the fragment of a song,
To which the running water rippled out
A symphony, until a piteous cry,
Two voices saying the same pleading words,
Quickened their footsteps. Cowering at the edge
Of the smooth, sliding, wind-forsaken sea

That drove them backward, stood a girl and boy
Gazing and trembling at its sure advance.
They had been watching kittiwakes, they said,
And seeking scallop-shells, and had not marked
The turning of the tide ; and now, to pass
The rocky wall that shut them from their home,
They must wade out into the sea that seemed
Terribly deep in its mysterious calm,
And they had heard the voices in the glen,
And called for help.

Well known to both the boys
Was the fair head whose six years' growth of hair
Fell as a golden veil from crown to waist,
And the brown head that nestled in its shade
Half fearful, half in shame of tears that dewed
Cheeks where no roses bloomed. The vicarage
Upon the hillside newly had become
Their father's home ; where these, the youngest born
After an elder group had sprung and past
From childhood, brought a memory of spring
Like autumn violets to their parents' path.

Knee deep to wade, each with a pair of arms
Clinging about their necks and pretty lips



Murmuring thanks, was not a task that called
For special daring, nor found either boy
Loth for the deed. Yet as they felt the stress
O' the living waters heaving landward, heard
The long, low hiss of currents round the rock,
And called to mind how this same sleeping sea
Could wake up Samson-like, and shake itself
And put forth dreadful strength, the playful smile
Faded from either face, and left instead
The grave, sweet look good men and angels wear
When aught is given to their hands to guard ;
And in that hallowed moment each boy-soul
Leant forward seerwise into unknown years,
And felt the thrill divine to manhood given
In saving, self-forgetting !

Twilight dun

Had fallen on the hills as they began
To climb the rough rock steps, behind the street,
That led them speediest to the vicarage ;
And Leonard passing their own garden-gate
With careful pace to suit three-year old feet,
Espied Aunt Ruth among her flowers, and cried
Exulting, with the pride of a young heart
Prone to forget how little it has done,

For thinking of the things it fain would do :
"We saved them both !" So hand in hand they
went,

Each child with its protector, till they reached
The busy home where their strange absence now
Had woke a sudden fear.

Loudly they talked
That night at supper-time, the hungry boys,
While Ruth cut up the loaf of fresh brown bread,
And on hot plates the silver herrings laid
Which they had watched at sunrise tumbled out
With myriad others from the trawler's hold :
Loudly they talked, with sense of something won
Akin to fame, of great deeds they would do
In coming years ; and longed for war renewed,
Altho' for peace proclaimed a sigh of joy,
Had newly swept throughout the weary land.
For deeds of him who fell in victory
Lived yet among the daily words of men,
Men who had loved his name as boys, before
Its fame had thundered from the midland main,
Or from the Danish shores ; for never he
By ridicule of hopes or fears had lost
A boy's warm love, nor lacked the courteous word

That quells the mutinous spirit in the breast
Of moody men, angered with slight and scorn.
Thinking of Cadiz Bay: "Oh when I serve
For such a captain," Leonard said, "my brow
Shall take the sabre cut that's meant for him,
Like his brave coxswain."

And then Evan's voice
Broke out in praise of how the hero lay
Bleeding beneath the moonlight, his left hand
Grasping the sword of his inheritance;
And how the rowers passed at his command
The nearest ship, nor paused, nor sought for aid
There for the life that ebbed in agony,
Because he would not smite a woman's heart
With dread foreboding, looking on his pain;
A woman waiting thro' the night to learn
Some tidings of her husband, while the storm
Of war raged on the land, and none could tell
What had befallen.

Then of further days
The records they rehearsed; the cabin boy
They saw in fancy spring into a sea
Red with the blaze of war, then fearless swim
Across the line of fire from ship to ship,

Despatches 'twixt his teeth ; then tracked his path
Lit by a crescent fame, till he had won
Honour from kings, yet had not lost meanwhile
The poor man's privilege being beloved
For his own worthy sake, apart from power
And gifts in hand for giving.

Then of days
Remoter yet, when lacking better aid
Of sextant's fine precision, seamen steered
With sea-ring, cross-staff, or the mariner's bow
Their devious voyage ; days when Raleigh sailed
The scholar, courtier, and adventurer ;
And Drake, the skipper's boy, of whom 'tis read,
"That pains with patience in his youth had knit
His soul, and made it solid and compact
For much endurance after," and who loved
The men of Plymouth, and with booty won
From western seas into their hands had brought
A better gift than diamonds of Cathay,
Fresh water in abundance ;—days when one
Greater than any sailed, he who bestowed
Toil and endurance unto worthier aim
Than gathering gold, seeking to bear Christ's name,
As his own name foretold, to eastern lands ;

So found a new world waiting in the west,
Noble Cristoforo of Genoa !

At last their voices flagged. Then said aunt
Ruth,

Who long had listened while her needle glanced
Swift as a shooting star, "Ah well, my boys !
Much you have said of great deeds you will do,
And sure you seem that all these worthy deeds
Will be yours to achieve ; but will you bear,
Either or both, to see what might be done
And not to do it? Yet that is the lot
Of many in this world, they being held
By chains invisible of duty vowed
To other ends, and God alone may know
How their hearts ache the while." There dropped
her voice,

She thinking of young days, and how she chafed
At first to serve for hire ; while, down below
The calm, well-ordered gardens where she dwelt,
She marked the cottage roofs where hidden lay
So many griefs, so many ills and wrongs
That she was once as free, as she was skilled,
To aid and comfort.

Then as both the boys
Were silent in the presence of a thought
Strange and unwelcome to their hearts, she said,
"To leave undone, methinks, is hardest task
God sets brave men to do. 'Put up thy sword!'
Was said to one who would have flung his life
Away in battle for his Master's sake,
And who upon the billows of the sea
Answering his call had heard His voice say 'Come!'"

A moment's reverent pause, the boys bestowed,
To separate her words from common things;
Then Leonard, listening at the window, cried,
"She's going with the tide! Bird on the wing!"
A schooner, timber-laden, that at noon
Rode at high water 'twixt the rocks, and drove
Her good elm keel upon the shingle bed;
And all the after day the busy folk
Had swarmed about her, going to and fro
With haste, like rooks nest-building; heaving up
The cargo from her hold, or urging on
The horses straining with the timber wains
Up the steep shore; some on the bounding plank
With upward steps hoisting huge baskets filled

With ballast sand ; some in down clattering file
Swinging the lightened wicker. Lagging work
Is not for them whose timepiece is the tide ;
And halliards, shrouds and ratlines that had barred
The sunset gold were in the gloaming lost
While still they worked, with call and cry that rung
Across the quiet bay.

Transfigured now
The goodly vessel shewed beneath the moon
Her naked masts and cross-trees clothed with grace
Of fair white sails ; and with a sudden bound
Of joy she rose to greet the waves that kissed
Her stem and stern, then with her lee-way bright
As diamonds, swept along her homeward path,
Fleet-winged and strong, and soon was lost to sight
By those who from the garden on the hill
Lingered to watch her.

“O thou breath of life !
Life of the Spirit ! Wilt thou so renew
The form that ebbing tides have left awhile
Stranded in alien rest upon the shore,
So clothe with strength and beauty and lift forth
Into fresh glory ?” Such deep yearnings thrilled
The soul of Ruth as, turning from the sea,

She saw the scattered gravestones gleaming white
A little space above. But Leonard piped
A strain for weighing anchor, keeping time
With tramping feet about the narrow path,
Making the heavy-headed poppies shed
Their silken petals and brown chafers boom
From shaken briars.

Bright the Sunday morn,
The morrow. Evan on the hillside lay,
Beneath the limestone wall that circled round
The named and nameless graves, waiting to hear
The bells ring out an answer to the waves
That clanged upon the shore ; plucking wild thyme
And thinking of the days, the perfect days,
The days that are to come ! The while his eyes
Drew in the picture that lay spread below :
The gabled roof of Leonard's home, the spires
Of many-coloured hollyhocks rising up
Above the feathered tamarisk, and the tufts
Of pink and white valerian that bedecked
The garden walls ; below, the broken lines
Of sunburnt roofs where yellow lichen crept,
, The chimneys haunted by the thieving daws ;
The shingle curve where yawls and trawlers lay

With steaming planks, slack ropes, brown sails
and nets

Outspread to sun and wind ; the basking groups
Of idle fishermen, and here and there
The red gleam of a pennon, great black buoys
Rolled on the yellow sand, and all beyond,
The blue, broad sea.

A little hand that dropped
Like apple-blossom on his hand, a voice,
Uttering its clear premeditated words,
Suddenly sweet as orchard linnet's song,
Startled the boy. Marian, the Vicar's child,
Said, as she offered him a posy made
Of roses white and crimson, "These are best
Of any in the garden ; they are yours
For saving Robin." Then drew back in haste,
The gift withheld, on finding Evan Clare,
Not Leonard.

"But," said Evan pleadingly,
"I was there too." "I know," she said, "but you
Did not save Robin, you saved only me !
Will you call Leonard here, and I will wait
To give the flowers and thank him?" Evan went
Feeling aggrieved, yet faithful in his quest ;

And, climbing up the hill again, he found
The maiden seated on a lone grey stone,
Her golden head bare to the sun, her eyes
Broad with the listening gaze of one who dwells
With many voices in one home, and hears,
Rarely, the whispers of the outer world
Uncrossed by human utterance.

Then he
Bethought him of the tale of Scotland's king,
Upon whose shores the angry winds had driven
The Atheling's sister, royal Margaret,
And how he found her seated on a stone
Beside the way, and won her for his bride,
He, the rough-handed warrior; and he longed,
Boy as he was, some being fair and young
Should clasp sweet hands about his neck once more,
As she did yestereve, once and for aye
(He being sisterless); and longed beside
To rush into the world and do great deeds,
For without these he deemed no love were won
In olden times or now.

Then Marian told,
While Leonard stood beside with flower-filled hand,
And Evan empty-handed, how last year,

And many years before, they all had dwelt
In a great town far inland, where all day
The iron-workers toiled, and round about
Gaped the dark mouths of mines ; and how at home
There were four sisters older than herself ;
How one tall soldier-brother went away,
So Robin now was like the only boy,
Yet not so strong and active as herself ;
He once was ill, and all the sisters cried,
They could not spare their pet, their baby boy—
“And so I thank you, Leonard, that you saved
Our Robin.”

Soon, too soon for either boy,
The bells rang out a pentacle of sound,
And motley groups besprinkled the hill-side,
And gathered 'neath the tower as passage-birds
Gather fresh-plumed about the masts and yards,
When from a southern coast a ship sets sail,
Bound for the north.

Two of the sisterhood
Marian espied guiding a straggling flock
Of children from the cottage school ; and two
With music-books hastened to lead the choir
In hymns no organ notes sustained nor filled

Their pauses, but the murmur of the waves
Heard thro' the open doors. Now when the chimes
Changed to a lone-voiced bell, she started up,
For at the gate her father turned with hand
Outstretched for her; and on her way aunt Ruth
Beckoned the lads, and all passed in and left
Silence without.

With greetings to and fro,
The hour of worship over, from the door
The vicar's wife passed down the path, but stayed
Her steps at Marian's prompting when the boys,
Evan and Leonard, salutation made,
And bade them welcome to the vicarage
That evening or another; and to Ruth,
Whose comely face was not unknown to her,
Nor yet the record of her kindly deeds
Through all the village, she gave fervent thanks
For the good service rendered by the boys
To her own truants.

There are days that make
In lifetimes such a change for gain or loss
As in the gardens, where one sun will bring
A flush of blossoms, and one day of storm
Sweep out a breadth of brightness. Day of gain

Was this to both the playmates, waking up
To sudden vigorous growth the folded bud
Of many a good intent. Th' influence
Of stedfast work performed, each helping each
By faithful doing of her daily task,
Leaving no woof perplexed of plans half-shaped
For other hands to sort; the homilies,
Unspoken, of the preacher's life who taught
Service by serving, self-forgetfulness
By holding griefs and joys that were not his
In hourly mem'ry, these with blessèd power
Moulded the growing minds; and knowledge held
Only as food for dreams, and never stored
In any garner, from that day became
A newly-prized possession. Haunts of birds,—
Flowers and sea-weeds long familiar grown,
To Leonard were a keen delight, and new
To those new dwellers in a country home.
He led their ready steps along the shore
Thro' woodland paths, and over pathless downs;
While they with eager words led Evan's mind
Along new ways. Pages he loved became
Fraught with new sense. Poems with outlines dim
As faces veiled, rose up before him now

Shining with glory ; and all fairy lore,
So precious in the fantasies that make
An unseen world vivid and ever near
To infant faith, became a stepping-stone
To faith in higher regions.—Worlds on worlds
Awoke to life beneath the crystal lens,
Searching the earth and water. Worlds on worlds
Broke on his eyes, uplifted to the stars,
The circling moons, the diamond dust of suns
Innumerable, nameless, that bestreak
The spaces as a wreath of trailing mist
Among the hills. And He Who all sustains,
Finite immensity holding in clasp
Of His infinity, Who telleth all
The number of the stars and every hair
On the young golden head, received henceforth
Daily the homage of a brighter faith ;
A flame that feeds upon the wholesome air
Of lawful knowledge, flickers in the blast
Of rude presumption, faints in foetid damps
Of pent-up ignorance !

His mother's word
Bade him prolong his sojourn by the sea.
And so the weeks went by, the morning hours

Spent 'mid the Vicar's books, his study-door
Was never closed against that eager hand,
While Leonard, with reluctant footsteps, went
Over the hill where in a farmhouse lodged
A soldier, broken down with wounds and years
Passed in a Spanish prison. He could teach
Of figuring and manuscript far more
Than yet, among the farm or village lads,
Any had skill to learn. Some Spanish books
And Virgil lying open on his desk
Marked him, they thought, for one who knew as
much
As men should care to know.

But Leonard's voice
Was heard with Evan's when the sisters four
Sang in the evening, Grace and Cicely,
Mabel and Agnes, and the father's hand
Drew from the viol eloquent deep notes,
That soared and pleaded, fervent as a prayer
Made for another. Hymns they perfected
To set, like polished jewels, in the zone
Of Sundays thro' the year; and carols blithe
Or plaintive, brought from Scotch and Irish hills,
The boys were taught.

O little did they know,
That group of kindly single-hearted girls,
How much beyond the teaching of an hour
Whose worth they counted not, they gave away
While the last rose of summer shed its bloom,
And rowan berries reddened! Out at sea,
Those songs should echo in the coming years,
And hush the ribald verse and reckless jest
By their pure presence,—keep the singers pure
When siren notes with sweet and evil call
Should lure them to destruction on the shores,
But for the music fraught with memories
And hopes of home and heaven.

PART II.

Out at sea !

Yes, it had come at last, the birds were flown,
And in the silent home above the waves
Ruth prayed for both her darlings. Days had
grown

To months, and months to years, since first they
went ;

And they had come again and gone again,
And they were boys no more. A bearded lip
Had pressed her own with Leonard's last, long kiss,
And Evan's head was bowed to pass the door,
Yet brought a snowstorm of rose petals down
On his broad shoulders.

Roses were not now
Withheld from him. The grave imperious child,
Marian, who took but little count of him,
Nor he of her, while Mabel, Cicely,
Or Grace were each in turn his boyhood's love,
Tho' set by years so far above him, now
Marian had gained her eighteenth year ; and he

Eight years her elder, saw in her a soul
To whom he might look up and yet not feel
That she looked down on him.

Twice had he come
And found the group around the Vicar's door
Held fewer, for a wife was Mabel now,
And Cicely a bride; and Agnes sat
In presence by her father, but her heart
Was flying with the swallows.

“Robin too,”

The Vicar said, “talked but of Evan now,
And needs must go to sea.” And then with voice
That trembled here and there he told, that he,
Robin, the boy that seemed a fragile flower
Set in a sheltered nook, had somewhat lacked
The bracing of the breezes and the sun;
And wayward tempers now inspired the lad;
With growing strength he fancied every tie
A heavy chain, the very affluence
Of love around him seemed to him a weight
That burdened him, as would a golden cup
An infant hand if set for daily use;
What wonder that he longed to drink life's stream
As any gipsy boy who lies with lips

Dipped to the water! Then the father turned
On Evan eyes that he remembered oft,
In pauses of some pastoral appeal,
Fraught with the wordless message of the soul,
More eloquent than words, eyes that were now
Like beacon lights by ocean mist bedimmed;
So subtly had the white veil overspread
And hid the wonted radiance: and he told
How he had thought to keep the youngest born
To follow in his footsteps, teaching him
To sow the Master's wheatfields, and to reap
Perchance where he had sown, when all his world
Was dark before the sunset.

“Yet maybe

Such work is not his work, nor would his soul
Be safer in my keeping. “Look,” he sighed,
“This fragile shell, this Argo, safely rode
'Mid rock and reef, her delicate toothèd keel
Unmarred, (you brought it from Amboina's isle)
And here, well prized and safe we thought from
harm,

It meets defacement, slipping from a hand
That held it tenderly.—I murmur not,
But I would fain he sailed with such as you.”

For other tongues had told, how Evan's life
As man to that was faithful whereunto
Not few are false,—aspiring of the boy!
None quicker to obey, and in command
To wrath none slower, nor might word profane
Pass the straight lips, set to a resolute line
By the strong will within: a fairer sight
For angels than the beautiful, lost curves
They wore in childhood.

“Would he sailed with you!”

Thought Marian too, and spoke her thought aloud,
Caring too much for Robin to be ware
Of all her words expressed.

A few months' cruise
Was over, and the boy returned while still
Evan, ashore, was chafing at delays
That kept him there, yet ever found the hill
Where he could hear the voices of the waves
And Marian's voice, the one good place on land.
And Robin loved him well, altho' he took
Small heed of him; shy hearts being like the deer,
Drawn on by music never played for them,
Yet starting back and flying from all hands
Outstretched, and words caressing.

Hour on hour,
Evan would tell of other seas and shores,
Of olive-trees beside the midland main,
And, for the wind-flowers white of English woods,
A breadth of flaming blossom. Homeward flight
Of rooks at evening, black against blue air,
Recalled the gondolas ; the swallows' flight,
The latine sailed balanza in the bay
Below Sicilian palms ; the pilot boat
Answering with ready speed a white flag seen
Out in the offing,—buoyant catria
Manned with brown rowers, crimson cap and belt
Flashing in sight one moment on the crest
Of giant rollers, where the Douro's stream
Wrestles with the Atlantic. Then he told
Of lithe canoes with "prows at either end"
Swarming about an English ship ; the sweet
Malayan tongue, Italian of the south,
Clamoured by half-clad beings, sweet of speech
But fierce of heart, proffering welcome piles
Of mangoes luscious with their golden juice,
Clove-coloured mangosteens, and creamy fruit
Hid in the yellow, smooth banana rind.
The land of gardens he had visited,

Gorgeous with flowers and butterflies and birds,
Rich in the silken woofs that clothe the limbs
Of beggars by the wayside, and bedeck
The Emperor amid his peacock fans.
He on those seas had watched the strange, old
 junks,

Vermilion-painted, grim with dragon shapes,
And moving to the dash of oars that kept
Time to the rowers' wild, discordant tune,
While from the cedar temple on the deck
The scent of incense drifted. Lovingly,
He praised his captain's noble ship, that braved
The dread typhoon raging along those shores;
And told how one fierce wave had seized a barque,
As Pluto seized Persephone, had borne
The helpless thing two miles inland;—next day
She lay among the rice-fields.

“Tell us more,”

Said Robin: then, while Marian, pale with fear
Of dangers past that shaped to her the tale
Of dangers yet to be, dropped from slack hands
The spoil of some long ramble, seaweeds brown
Mingled, companions strange, with violets,
He told how, speeding homeward, adverse winds

Had changed their course, and how at dead of night,
The starboard watch being his,—no moon nor stars,
He heard the full-blown sails flap suddenly,
And each taut rope fall slack ; and such a hush,
As if a death-stroke had been struck, held all
A moment !—With the next the sails were filled,
The wind boomed in the bowlines, and like bird
New plumed the ship flew thro' the dark.
Unknown, nameless in any chart, that island rock
She passed so close to leeward, but few feet
Were 'twixt her and perdition.

But few feet,
O fair ship ! and how many potent prayers
Breathed for the loved and absent on calm eves
The other side o' the world, last thought !—first
thought
Of beating hearts woke by the rising blast
Roaring among the fir-trees.

Came at length
The day that summoned both ; the old man's wish
Was granted for his boy, Robin, would sail
With Evan Clare, and he, post-captain now
Of the good frigate "Falcon", went with heart
Light with the hope that this one voyage o'er,

Returning he might claim his promised wife,
Marian. The boy he loved as one with her,
And took him to his love as one would take
A leaf beside a flower, tho' till the flower
Blossomed the leaf had lacked regard.

Athirst

For something new was the boy's spirit, tuned
But little to endurance, and still less
To sailor reverence for the powers that be.
To him all stolen waters need be sweet,
All fruit forbidden, trees to be desired.
And this they gave to Evan's guardianship;
Clay which th' influence of few years should mould
To honour or dishonour, gold uncoined
Ready for Cæsar's legend or the words,
"Holiness to the Lord!"

PART III.

The lamps of heaven
Hung o'er the city on a festal night,
When for the birthday of its sailor king
The dark ways beamed with lights, silver and gold,
Ruby and green, like jewels strung to deck
An Ethiopian chieftain: for the dark
Was still predominant; no tongues of flame
Feeding on ether, turned the night to day,
No light electric thrust its radiant wedge
To cleave the blackness. Yet on either hand
Clusters of mimic stars lit palace fronts,
Trophies bedecked them, and in blaze of light
Britannia sat beside the surging waves
Triumphant. Streaming down the glittering streets,
Went multitudes with cheering here and there,
And heard above the roll of chariot-wheels
Tinkle of music in the square made known
The dance within, and round the open door,
Waited a crowd to see the lanterns flash
On some gay masquerader entering. Dark

In the full river, rolled the heavy hulls
Of vessels at their moorings. Dark the trees
Rose to the starlight, in the parks, and where
Among the avenues of chesnuts dwelt
A girl whose lonely footsteps, day by day,
Drew nearer to a throne.

The midnight shook
A thousand vibrant towers, the watchman's cry
Answered the hour before the lamps died down
To the last oildrop, and the gazers turned
Homeward. There was a narrow street and steep,
That dropped to meet the river wharves, aside
From the wide thoroughfare : the evening through,
No joy-lights beamed there, for the strong went
forth

To see the show, and if a window held
A flickering star, 'twas but a candle burned
Beside a sick man's pallet.

Suddenly,
High up a window opens, and a cry
Piercing rings out, and rushes out a flame,
Flame after flame ; and all the street is thronged
With upturned faces, echoing with shouts.
The passing wheels are stayed, and awestruck eyes

Look on the fiery power that, captive, wrought
Their work or pastime, turned a rebel now,
And dreadful in its freedom as of old
The Thracian gladiator, when he burst
From bondage of the arena, and laid waste
The land from Alps to Rhegium.

Silver streams

Leap upward thro' the glare and fall, and rise
In hissing steam; the crackling rafters drop,
The splitting tiles dance in the blaze that swings
On the night breeze. Half-blinded from the door,
Stagger faint women clutching at their babes,
And down the narrow stairs, with prayers and
moans,
The feeble are borne forth. Safe, safe, all safe!
Tho' flying, empty-handed, back to life,
As men go to their graves. Safe, all safe!—

No!

A woman's piteous voice among the crowd
Recalls the passing horror: "One lies there,
But half-way down the stair; she clung to me,
Stumbled and fell. I could not turn, my boys
Filled both my arms—Mother of none, not mine!
A poor, lone creature! Save her all the same;

Lone death is terrible!—No, not too late,
The fire was fiercest on the highest floor,”—
So pleaded she, and some made for the house,
Some raised a ladder, then shrank back aghast
At sound of crashing walls. “Childless, no wife!
I have both wife and child.”—“Woman, be still!
Why should we fling our lives away for her?
If saved, why who rewards us? and if lost,
Two go instead of one.” So, loud or low,
Men’s voices answer the persistent voice,
Then break into a shout; for one has dared
To climb the ladder, and has sprung within
With quick, light bound as one who leaps on deck
With life and hope before him.

Then a pause,—

And then a cry of pain, a cry for help,
Help that is ready from the hands outstretched
Beneath the sill whereon he rests his load,
The lifeless woman. She is safe at last,
Passed down from man to man, and waking up
To life again out of the choking swoon;
Perchance with a drear feeling at her heart;
Because she thought to wake with angel calls,
And not amidst this dark and shouting crowd,

With the sweet gold of Heaven's full equal light
Instead of night made day by fire.

And he
Who saved the life, perchance so little prized,
Comes slowly down the ladder, one strong arm
Hanging as abject as the forest bough
The gipsy's hand half severs green, then leaves
To wither to the sere wood,—his by right;
And the light upward step, soundless and swift,
Changed suddenly, as shower of snow unheard
Melting on sun-warmed roofs, catches the ear
With slow and heavy fall. The glowing face,
That turned an instant from his perilous way
'Twixt flame and dark, now wan as hawthorn bloom
After a night of storms; the ardent soul,
That in such supreme moment doth express
Itself in every feature and doth flash,
For who will mark, a foreglimpse of the face
Which shall awake hereafter, when the soul
Transfigures its own dwelling shining thro'
The flesh that veils it here,—succumbent now;
And all the beauty of a high resolve
Faded from lip and brow, and in its stead
Anguish predominant.



They bore him thence
Along the dusky streets, while overhead
Above the lines of houses, blind and blank,
Broke the blue summer dawn, (wild hyacinths
Answer that blue in May),—broke thro' clear air
Unstained by smoke drift; and beneath the trees
On whose young boughs once hung bright plumèd
birds

In gilded cages, when the Stuart Charles
Held his most sinless pastime 'mid his flowers
And speechless favourites. Of lime and elm,
The shadows, woke upon the paths before
The slowly moving convoy reached their bourne
Within that hospital, whose patron-saint
Is fitly he who quelled the dragon's power;
For so the votaries of the healing art
Subdue the powers of evil. There they laid
The hero of the night, and searching found
A letter that revealed his name and Ruth's;
And so, before the noon of that same day
That had no name for him, the sailor's name,
"Brave Leonard Williams," was on royal lips,
And wafted to and fro in stately rooms,
As well as breathed with blessing under roofs

Where single rooms are homes.

For as sea-tide

Presses against the river's widening flow,
Till up thro' all its multitudinous links
Of blended drops the potent swell is felt,
And miles away it heaves the summer grass
Fringing a palace garden ; so the strong
Sway of some circumstance will rise and pass
Upward from rank to rank.

But of his fame

Leonard unconscious lay, nor recognised
Ruth, with her mother eyes and voice of home,
Ever beside him. Some who watched him thought
The burning dwelling haunted him, and life
Of her he snatched from death, so oft he cried,
"The sky is blackness—not a star ; and now
It changes,—vivid fire ! the water burns,
Look at the crimson torrents !—There again
A ball of light !—Stars ! myriad, flying stars !
—Aye ! aye ! We'll bring her thro', no fear for her ;
She has seen rougher times."

And all the while

The sailor soul was half a world away,
And 'mid the storm-winds where two oceans meet

His ship was dashing through the crimson waves,
And the rare glory of the Southern lights
Dazzled his sleepless eyes. On masts and yards
Were poising globes of fire, and snow and hail
Falling in ruby showers, and everywhere
The heavens were throbbing with mysterious gleams,
And meteors shooting here and there, with flight
Like swallows o'er a lake at sunset. Nought
Of the great horror of the past night's work,
The blackened quivering beam, the desperate spring
That saved both lives, the dreaded crash that left
Life in but half his frame, the fearful cry
Of his own voice, that seemed a voice unknown,
Troubled him now. So merciful is God,
Giving the soul wings of the bird to flee
And leave the suffering flesh, and friends who weep
Helpless beside it.

After three days, came
A waking to things present, and he knew
That the long roll for ever in his ears,
Now low, now louder, was the ebb and flow
Of London's tide of traffic, not the sea
Breaking on southern shores nor in the bay
Where Ruth was waiting. Turning then he saw



She sat anear him, her appealing eyes
All satisfied with his full answering look
That spoke the soul's return ; and her lorn heart
Was joyful as a child whose bird had flown
Out of a broken cage, with flutterings wild,
Now near, now lost to sight, but ere the morn
Was found in its old dwelling-place. Ere long,
Another stood within the curtained screen
Drawn between him and other sufferers ;
One with grave, tender eyes, and hands that held
Roses of many hues. At sight of her,
Out of the depths of memory rose that day,
The evening and the morning, that had seemed
To make a fresh creation, and he knew
That his last deed had answered back the call
Of boyhood's aspiration. Fair, last deed
Of the right hand ! He guessed not yet, the last ;
Tho', till the morning when it should revive
To new work in Christ's Kingdom, it must lie
Death-stricken.

There are those that crave, when death
Has taken one away, for the last words,
Whether a creed, a prayer, a song of joy :
Better to know last deeds were good, and spoke

The creed of all the life. And blessed they
Whose last deed saves a perilled life from death,
Or perilled soul from fall!

Then Marian told,
How many men of noble birth had seen
His noble act; so many were astir
About the streets that night, and thro' the dawn
Had followed hither, careful how he fared,
And seeking for his name, and some had left
Money for his behalf. "Less for your need
Than as a tribute of esteem, nay love:
Women unknown and children love you now,
And men have proffered pence from hard-won pay
Down in dark mines, or where they toil to make
The strange, new, iron roads. Oh Leonard! now
You have so many friends, so many prayers
To call you back to health, we shall not miss
Your voice much longer from our choir." But he,
Too weak to gather in the thought of fame,
Said only, "I thank God that I have done
The deed I longed to do." And in the calm,
And clearness of that single thought he dwelt,
And human praise, as yet, was as the lamp
Unneeded at the sunrise.

After a pause

He said: "Aunt Ruth, you were soothsayer true,
In the old days, that evening these your words:
'To leave undone, methinks, is hardest task
God gives brave men to do.' Yes, when I felt
The first rung of the ladder press my foot,
It had been worse than death had any voice
Forbid me to go forward.—Where is he,
Our own, dear Master Evan?" presently
He asked of Marian; and she answered back,
With a heart-leap of joy that shook her words,
"The Falcon would be homeward bound in June,
And now we look for them ere fall of leaf,
Evan and Robin!"

PART IV.

All her studden sails set,
The Falcon, homeward bound, flew thro' the waves.
The fallen leaf she left in sister lands
Of England in the south, while hands at home
Plucked the first rose ; and, baffled by no storms,
Swept from the ocean of the coral isles
And currents broad and slow into the realm
Of brave, west winds, and streams straight, swift,
and strong

That cleave the Atlantic wave. In trembling belt
Of calms that hold the wrestling winds apart,
She lingered for few days, passed thence in storms
And skirted the Sargasso's yellow field,
And isle whose peak soars 'mid the upper clouds
That streak the sky with feathers. Now they
breathe,

Those sunburnt mariners, a cooler air,
Whispered along a current's reflex path
From northern shores ; and round about their keel
For many a league the strange sea-nettles glide,

Translucent shapes, gold-streaked.

O Northern air!

Life-giving, sweet, telling of tempered climes!
The day seems now not far when English shores
Again shall rise in sight, village and town
Clustered beneath the cliff; and round the bows
The boats shall gather, bringing purple plums
And yellow gages dropped from scorching walls,
And glittering beads of swarthy mulberries
Heaped up in wrinkled cabbage-leaves where rolls
The large, bright dewdrop; bringing store of cream
That tells of broad, beflowered meadows spread
Between the harvest-fields. Rich feast for lips
Parched with the briny winds!

Why sit apart

With such a weight of trouble on your brow,
Good Evan Clare? Darkly against the west,
Burning with sunset, shew the gathering groups
Upon the poop in twilight idleness.
Laughter and words ring out with new-strung sound
Pitched to a note of hope; the seamen crowd
About the coxswain, whose blithe fiddle lilt
Many a tune well known, that bears the heart,
Faster than favouring winds to homes afar

As if each note acute pierced arrow-like,
Evan's stern face relaxes into lines
Of quivering anguish as he steps below,
Nor, entering his cabin, lifts his eyes
Even to Marian's picture.

It were hard,
Having gone forth some jewel in our hand
Entrusted by another, to return
Bereft of it, and striving to find words
To make it clear none could have saved the loss.
But oh! a life, a life! to take that forth
With all its past and future, and return
With but a date to mark its vanishing,
Can there be sadder task!

It was at noon,
Some fourteen days gone by, when loosed from hold
Of sultry calm, the ship, like uncaged bird
Pursued by the winged tenants of the wood,
Fled from the persecution of the storm
With trysails set and masts aslant.—A cry,
“Man overboard!” and every eye is fixed
Upon the captain, eager for the word
To bring the ship about and lower boat:
All prompt to save, few knowing who the lost.

He knew full well, and yet forbad the deed
That would have jeoparded the lives of all,
All in his keeping; tho' for this one life
Freely he would have flung away his own,
His life for Robin's.

There were some that said,
At that dread moment shewed their captain's face
Like face of any stranger, fixed resolve
Setting its iron mask upon the lines
Of wonted kindliness. Like firm resolve
Withheld him many days from looking back
Upon that moment's deed, while every hour
Dangers bespoke his keenest vigilance,
By night and day, and sleep he snatched as one
Who watches by the dying. Peaceful times
Returning, he looked back and faced his deed,
And saw that it was upright. 'Twas the fruit
Of daily self-negation, when the choice
Lay 'twixt the promptings of his love and call
Of duty, and he answered to that call.
For as a learner's hand deliberates,
Poised o'er the notes, before it wakes a chord,
But practised in discernment of the true,
Strikes fearless of an error; so all deeds

Well pondered and well chosen trained his soul
To unpremeditated deed.

Alas !

For all that may be said, we can but shew
Our deeds to others dimly in a glass,
Not set them face to face ; and on him fell
The shadow of a sorrow, deeds tho' just
Yet have the power to cast. Dark shadow, dread,
For those who have not walked for darker miles
In shadow cast by sin ! How should he tell
The tale in Robin's home ? how quell the doubt
Unspoken, yet read clear in women's eyes,
"Was it so sure none could have saved our boy ?
God doth work miracles when men have faith
To look for them."

And then before his eyes,
Closed against Marian's picture, there arose
A vision of the morning on the hill :
The very colour of the garden flowers,
Holly-oak and valerian, light and shade
Upon the village roofs, the fishing-boats
Drawn up along the shingle, golden sand,
Blue sky and sea, and then—a hand that held
Roses, a voice with cruel words, "but you

Did not save Robin !”

Oh, too hard, too hard !

For who could tell as Robin would have told,
How Evan's love had tended him when he,
Beneath a tropic sun that smote straight down
Thro' the clear, vibrant air relentless rays,
Lay fever-struck ; how Evan sped the hours,
The leaden-footed hours of midday calm,
With outread poet's tale, and mountain wind
Scented with heather breathed about the path
Of the Lake Maiden, whisper of the woods
Where Rylston's white doe wandered ; till across
The glitter of dumb waters came a sigh
Sudden and short, and then a darkening line
Broader and broader, and the sea wind woke
From slumber, and once more the ripples laughed
About the keel. Perchance he might have told
Of one still, sultry night, rent by a storm
That roused the echoes from volcanic hills
Of Java, and he, lying on the deck,
Had cowered and quivered with electric thrills
Thro' all his weakened frame, and Evan watched
Beside him till he slept ; and when he woke,
Haunted with terror, he was watching still,



And all the sky was clear and hung with stars,
And over the dark, flashing waters swept
The land-breeze, sweet with odours of the flowers
And spices of the islands. Then he saw
In Evan's eyes the look of one who turns
Homeward, from journeying in distant lands,
With new thoughts that belong not to his home ;
For all his soul was rapt into the space
Where floated myriad worlds, and had received
Such revelation as no human tongue
May fashion into speech. Yet as they sought
The glittering links of Scorpio, Argus bright,
Regulus and Canopus, blazing gems !
And miles below, betwixt their uplift eyes
And those sure lights, flitted the falling stars,
Woke Evan's words, and dwelt upon the sign
Of sorrow set in glory 'mid the worlds,
The Southern Cross, and on the Love supreme
That watches, sleeping never ; ordering all :
The everlasting orbit of the stars
Whose tale of years no son of Adam counts,
The lifetime of the stars whose birthday men
Have noted, and have marked them wax and burn
And wane and vanish, and the transient gleam

Of the unstable meteor.

“Half a year

Had passed since then ; how long a space
Out of a life that numbered nineteen years,
One summer short ! and as a tune complete
Returns upon the ear, with rise and fall
And emphasis of notes, when it has ceased ;
So on this evening in the silence, death
Brings to the living, came the memory
To Evan of the whole, short life ; and now
He recognised a change but little marked
By hour and day in coming, yet a change
Such as in April gives the chestnut boughs
New outlines, when the unsheathed, drooping leaves,
Feeling the rising sap thro' root and stem,
Feeling the sun and breezes, rise outspread,
Sharp, broad, and vigorous. In these last months
The lad, whose languid spirit once had shrunk
From daily hardship, and whose fitful bursts
Of courage for new enterprise failed aye
Before it touched on deeds, had seemed as one
Life stirred by unseen influence ; no work
But met with prompt acceptance, and new hopes
Brightened his brow, yet parted not his lips

With wonted boast. In these last days of storm
The place of danger, he had craved and kept,
The weather earings, and so, reefing sail,
Lost footing and was gone!

Reproachful eyes!

Mother and sister, look not on me so!
Blind eyes turn not so wistfully! Oh hand
Of loving father, wait not so outstretched
As years ago for Marian, outstretched now
For Robin, who will come no more! Dear lips,
Say not, I gave unwisely when I gave
Honour and peril sought for! Pleaded so
The soul of Evan, living in an hour
That waited in the future.

Present help

In trouble is our God! He doth not shew
The future help that yet He keeps in store
When strikes the hour we dread. And day by day,
As homeward sped the ship from zone to zone,
His hand sustained his faithful servant. Nought
Left undone, wrought imperfectly betrayed,
A spirit heavy with a care not one
Might share with him.

Our channel entered, came

Out of his land sound of a name well known,
And met him on the sea ; the pilot brought
The tale of Leonard's deed, and with it brought
Back to one hearer boyhood's dreams of fame,
To set beside fulfilment. He had won,
Leonard, the thing they longed for, and the price
He paid seemed not too heavy. Fain would he,
Who brought the Falcon home in all her pride,
Unscathed by storm, that hour have changed his lot
With Leonard.

Ruth and Leonard had returned
To the old home beside the sea, before
Evan could seek them in the city. Thence
He sent by letter all his mournful tale
To Robin's father, promising with speed
To follow when his work was ended. Day
And hour he would not tell, that, unprepared,
The utterance of their anguish might be free,
And so the worst be over.

Day and hour
Had come at last. Reaching the little town
Some three miles distant from his journey's end,
He left the highway and the rattling wheels,
And struck thro' sandy lanes and crossed the hills.

Still with a sailor's vigilance of eye,
Unmastered by the sorrow at his heart,
He marked the varied changes of the leaf
In wooded hollows; noted where a wood
Was newly felled, and on the wellknown roof
The glittering slates, beneath whose thatch once
dwelt

The soldier scholar; nor forgot to greet
The brown-eyed girl who passed him at the stile
With acorns from the coppice.

Sunset light

Streamed thro' the garden branches, when he reached
The Vicar's gate: no footstep on the path,
No voices far or near; the open door
He entered,—then within he heard a cry
As if one, listening there, had caught the sound
Of footsteps that for years she longed to hear,
And Marian sprang to meet him. Yet before
Their lips had met, the old man pressed between,
And fell on Evan's neck, and clasped his hand
And wept aloud, saying, "You saved my boy!
You saved my Robin! he is safe, my boy!
And I have lived to thank you."

All amazed,

And fearing some false story had outstripped
His coming, Evan stood among them all,
Till calmer spoke the father, "We may thank
Our God for him, for in His faith and fear
He hath departed; Blessèd are the dead
Who die in Him!" Then Marian, mother, Grace,
Greeted him lovingly, as one who brought
No mournful tidings; and to him they gave
Some written sheets Evan had sent, unread,
With Robin's books and letters. Had he felt,
Tho' hastening home, some strange presentiment
Of coming separation, that he wrote
This full outpouring of his inmost life;
So lavish in expression who had been
Chary of utterance by lip or pen?
Or with a newborn sense of trust and love
Had sought at least in fancy to commune
With those who loved him?

Many months and days
Inscribed, betokened it no sudden work
Born of a fleeting fervour. Incomplete,
One sentence, as a spray from whence the flower
Is broken by a passing hand; below
The page was empty.

Here, his words appealed
To Marian or his mother—there, they craved
His father's listening ear; as if, each thought
That blossomed in the garden of his soul,
He recognised, as sprung from seed long sown
By various hands. But all about the lines
Stood Evan's name: one while he wrote, "I love
Evan as you may love him, but not less
Than you can love him, Marian," and again,
"I have not hated evil for itself,
But for the sharp, deep pain it brings to him
Who fain would find all better than himself.
I have not followed good for love of it,
Only for love of Evan." Now, a date
Recorded carefully, and words of thanks
For some great peril past.—Tempted to break
Orders received, and linger on the shore
For a night's revelry, the yielding soul
Had only 'scaped foul snares and treacherous words
Held back by love of Evan.

"He is one,"

Later he wrote, "who proves a glorious life
Need hold no famous deeds; and day by day
To vanquish self, deny it, and confess

Another Master, calls for constancy
And all a hero's courage." And anon,
"We read to-day of one who having found
Christ upon earth, to the same Master led
His brother's steps;" thereafter, words upraised
To Him Who then was present unto him;
And father, mother, sister, aye, and friend,
A moment were forgotten.

Days gone by
Recalling, on another page he said,
"I am not fearful now of pain or cold,
Or hurt or weariness; I can endure,
Not carelessly like Evan, yet content.
Yes, even death, whose terrors from a child
I suffered with a troubled mind, has now
An aspect changed; the death in life I fear
That sin's slow poison works. 'Thy will be done,'
As it is done in Heaven!' with those words
I long for Heaven more than when I tune
My aspiration to thy glowing strain,
Apocalyptic Seer!—Done perfectly,
All that we find so hard to do in part;
Done joyfully, because no adverse will
Within us chafes against it! No more calm

Deathlike, for lack of Thee, oh wind of life !
With languid drifting upon hidden shoals ;
And no more storm, wind against wind in strife,
The Spirit with the spirit."

Few more words
Came after these ; then Evan turned his gaze
Back from the window to the darkening room,
Where twilight drew all shadows into one,
And by the lightness of his heart he learnt
The load of pain it rested from. The day
Long dreaded, he had looked upon and found
A blessing in its gift, a light to reach
And crown with light, the days that had gone forth
Unnoted from the Present to the Past ;
Days that had brought in silence, one by one,
A better work than boyhood's ardent dream
Gave to a single day. Again the words
Sprang from the father's lips, his ear attent
Catching the rustle of the folded page
Laid reverently down, "You saved my boy,
I bless you for your work !" And round the
name
Of the departed sailor-son gone first
Unto the "better country," evermore

Thanksgivings hovered, sweet as primroses
Budding 'neath last year's leaves.

Next morning sought
Evan, with Marian at his side, the home
Of Leonard, hero of the village now,
But found Ruth only there. "Gone to the
farm,"

She said, with smiles gleaming across the tears
That flowed at sight of Evan, and the signs
Of sorrow Marian wore: "Gone to the farm
To find and bring away some books he left
In school-days; books about the gardening art,
That fills his mind by night and day, till none
Would think, a sailor, he was once. He lost
Indeed the life he loved so well, but found
Another even here." And then she told,
How with the gold bestowed by unknown hands
He thought to buy a plot of ground, and make
A goodly garden, there to rear the flowers
Of other climates; he had gathered store
Of seeds, with names unheard on English ground,
In his last voyage, little knowing then
(Prompted by reverence of the beautiful,
That woke within him when a boy he led

The woodland ramblers from the Vicarage)
That his own eyes should watch their growth, his
life

Among them be renewed.

Crossing the glen,
They met that evening; Evan, not alone,
Nor Leonard, by his side the brown-eyed girl
Evan remembered passing by the stile,
With acorns from the coppice—yesterday,
Was it but yesterday! Then fervent words
Of greeting, pity, praise, Evan bestowed,
Feeling a sudden sense of affluent health
And strength unmarred, looking upon the man
Whose untried wealth of vigour, he, a boy,
Had vainly longed to win; who in his form
Now bore for aye the seal of suffering,
Tho' reddening lip and cheek gave vivid sign
Of health's returning tide. "No praise from you,
Dear Master Evan," said he: "well you know,
'To leave undone, that is the hardest task
God sets brave men to do.' Nor will I take
Your pity, for such gain has come of loss."
And then he told how pretty Annie Lee,
The farmer's only daughter, little prized

The love he offered with both outstretched hands
Two years gone by, but now esteemed her own
A flower too worthless to be plucked and kept
In his left hand. Annie meanwhile had climbed
A bank where shone, breaking its trefoil sheath,
The flag flower's scarlet berries, which she brought
With crimson leaves of sycamore and beech,
And straggling stems, upon whose top yet perched
The blossom of the toadflax, orange-lipped ;
And of the host of gold-tongued, purple bells
That quivered on the heath, athwart the glow
Of longer days, one loitering harebell left,
And giving them to Marian, asked if flowers
That Leonard praised in lands across the seas
Could make a fairer garland? But a sound
Held back her gamesome words half-way, the
sound

Saddest of all in all earth's notes of pain,
A strong man's weeping. Old familiar words
On Evan's lips, the name of creek or hill
On shores where he might wander never more,
Brought back the memory of the life gone by
With longing insupportable.

Oh tears,

That will flow forth tho' all hath been resigned
With uncomplaining lips ! may ye not stream
Around the sacrifice, as once of old
Round the lone altar by the prophet reared,
And not the less the fire of God bestow
His token of acceptance? Sudden tears !
That fall like rain-drops from the summer bough
After the storm is over, and the sun
Shines where the lightning flashed, holy ye make,
So falling, wonted mirth of other hours ;
The smiles that break to sound of laughter blithe
As childhood's,—blither, for its music springs
Out of a heart not light thro' ignorance
Of life's unlifted burden, but a heart
Light in that all its cares are cast on Him
Who careth for us.

We may look beyond
That evening to the pictures of new years :
To Leonard 'mid the roses of all lands,
The fluttering leaves of golden-stemmed bamboos,
The sceptred yuca's bells, the drifted snow
Or red glow of azaleas, cactus cups
Brimful of fire, and all the thousand tints
Of tulip, amaryllis, hyacinth,

Rising in glory from their garden graves ;—
To Ruth again with children on her knee,
And all the hopes that waited unfulfilled
About the gabled house made daily joys ;
To Marian's home where Evan's mother dwelt,
And Evan's younger brother, come to keep
The place the Vicar longed his boy should hold
Working with him ; to Marian waiting there
A sailor's wife, her heart a passage bird,
Coming and going with the heart that made
Her summer sunshine,—Marian watching there,
Her firstborn in her arms, across the bay
The strange dark ocean messengers glide forth,
Asking no favouring wind, fearing no calm ;
To Marian welcoming a homeward bound,
Dear white-winged ship, her lastborn in her arms,
And in her heart a newer joy, because
The last good-bye was said, last voyage made,
And last, long days of waiting and of watch
Were over, and should come no more.

So far

Shall we look on, or bid them here farewell,
And leave them with their story incomplete,
As needs must be the longest story told

For souls eternal? Shall we say farewell,
And leave them standing 'twixt the setting sun
And the low moon, the fading lights and shades,
The growing shades and lights on land and sea?



Mors Janua Vitæ.

IS last choice word the poet writes ;
That lay hath held him long,
Thro' silence of the summer nights,
Hearing the dull, rough tongue

Of kine that grazed beside the hedge,
Hearing the watchdog bay,—
The hum of a train that crossed a bridge
Many a mile away.

The last word writeth he, the last !
Yet ere, complete and whole,
His work lay 'neath his eyes, there past
A new dream o'er his soul,

Born of some pregnant word, some line
Wrought in his finished lay ;
"A poet's endless work is mine !"
He said, and saw the day.

"An endless work ! As on the bough,
The autumn leaves among,
The next year buds already shew ;
So song begetteth song.

"'Omega !' do we write ? there cries,
'Alpha !' the soul's next breath ;
From seeming ends new births arise,
A door of life is death !"

All thro' the golden summer days,
About the meadows wide,
He roamed, with bright triumphant gaze ;
The passers stepped aside.

His eye, the poet's eye, sole star
That daylight cannot quell,
Glowed as it sought a world afar,
Or caught the invisible.

Some whispered : "See his proud, bright smile,
He knows his work well done ;"
But he rejoiced at heart the while
O'er work not yet begun.

The shimmering, silver light that flew,
A breeze track, o'er the grass ;
The shadow world, so false, so true,
Held in the water's glass ;

The dancing of a lissome spray
Wherefrom a bird took flight,
The bees that humming o'er the hay
Missed flowers in bloom last night ;

The village children's practised hymn
Thro' open windows brought,
Wove music low and pictures dim
About his growing thought.

Came one with sudden tidings sent,
"A friend death's door is nigh !"
Sorrowing to his side he went,
Thinking of days gone by.

O sudden pang! when days, we thought
Part of life's present store,
Have joined the past, and shall be wrought
In our life's tale no more.

Patient he watched him thro' the night,
Hearing his numbered hours
Rung by a thousand bells, the light
Whisper of summer showers

Falling upon the river wide,
That flowed by wharf and quay;
Hearing the low lap as the tide
Swelled from the far-off sea.

"Oh ebbing tide of life!" he wept,
"Oh life, so nearly done!
Oh toilsome path, so nobly kept!
Oh height, so newly won!

"My friend, my friend, who walked with men
As some men walk with God,
Believing, hoping, loving when
Bowed down beneath their rod.

“Who walked with God as others walk
With men, in friendship sweet,
Silent when strangers needs must talk,—
Communion most complete!

“Oh noble brow, so calm and still!
Like garden 'neath the moon,
All earthly colours lost that fill
The eye in radiant June,

“So thoughts of earth and time to-night
In shadow hides from thee;
Shadow from that great world of light
Which lifts thy soul from me.

“My friend, my friend!” unspoken words
Yet did the dying hear?
Sudden as one when long-loved chords
Sweep o'er the listless ear,

The slumb'ring eyes uncloze again;—
Is that a farewell gaze?
Can such a living light remain
From brightest, outspent days?

Is there a sunset's fading glow
In those far-reaching eyes,
Where hopes into fulfilment grow?
So 'twixt the sea and skies

Upon a vessel's prow stood one,
Triumphant and serene,
Who had endured in hope alone,
As seeing the Unseen ;

One who had shaped his course in faith
To find a hidden land,
And found at last no cloud-like wraith,
The golden, stedfast strand

Of the new world.—That vivid fire
The watcher breathless saw ;
Joy held his heart from grief's desire,
And sealed his lips with awe.

One moment saw he, light divine,
The next, but lonely clay ;
"Oh man, an endless life is thine!"
He said, and saw the day.

“Omega !” do we write there cries,
“Alpha !” the soul’s next breath.
From seeming ends new births arise,
A door of life is death !”



The Sea-Gulls.



STOOD by the side of the river,
Many a mile from the sea,
Watching the rushes quiver,
And the reapers crossing the lea ;

And under the pollard willows,
Brindled and white and dun,
The kine lowing loud to their fellows ;
And red was the setting sun.

I heard wings over me wheeling,
A strange and a sudden cry ;
It startled the grey rat stealing
From the osier bed close by ;

And I saw three sea-gulls going
Away to the golden west,
And a long, cold breeze came blowing
Over the river's breast.

I watched their white wings flashing,
As they wheeled in their changeful flight,
And I thought of the breakers dashing
Ashore in a darksome night ;

I thought of the storm-wind sweeping
Over a wild, white sea,
Where the cruel waves come leaping
Like wolves when travellers flee ;

I thought of the wrecks next morning,
Lives lost and lives made drear,
For the sea-bird inland gives warning,
A stormy season is near ;

And methought I could hear the billows
Sigh when their wild notes cried,
I standing among the willows
In the calm of the eveningtide.

That night, for all on the water
My spirit went forth in prayer,
Tho' I was no mariner's daughter
At home with that aching care.

My father's work-days are over,
The grass on his grave is new,
In my brother's wheat-fields the clover
Shone with the moonlit dew ;

And I saw one far lattice giving
A light by the river side,
At the mill where Janet is living,
My sister, a last year's bride ;

And I read in the moonlight a letter
I had read so often before,
("Oh love, I can love thee no better,
Tho' I love thee for evermore").

He wrote from his forest dwelling,
Many a mile from the sea,
With a hand that was weary of felling
The pine and the blue gum tree.

He told of the settlers reaping ;
Our corn was but springing here !
And that Eastertide they were keeping
When the beeches were red and sere ;

Gathering pears and cherries,
 (Our leaves had just broken their sheaths!)

And the passion-flower's golden berries,
 Strung on its glossy wreaths.

A moment, the blue smoke curling
 Up to those southern skies,
And the endless forest unfurling
 Floated before mine eyes ;

Wide pasture with cattle bells ringing,
 And the sound of the long coo-ee,
And the purple lianas swinging
 From the boughs of the wattle tree ;

Then back with a sudden shadow,
 As a cloud bedarkened the room,
Over the silent meadow,
 Out of the light and the gloom,

That fear came stealing and haunting,
 Tho' danger was none to 'ware,
Grieving my spirit and daunting
 All but my words of prayer.

And this was but three days departed,
 This that I call to mind,
I standing so fearless hearted,
 Plucking the withy-wind

That has not had time for drooping,
 White bells and garlands green,
And watching the children trooping
 Empty-handed to glean.

Oh glow! oh glory of morning!
 After a night's dark spell;
Oh joy to greet the returning!
 Heart of mine, it was well,

That prayer of thine in thy fearing!
 That prayer that held never a name!
Northward a vessel was steering,
 Homeward a true heart came,

Safely, while storms were sweeping
 Over a wild, white sea,
Swiftly, while earth was sleeping,
 Home, my true love, to me!

That prayer from thy fear upspringing,
Like bird from a shaken spray,
With blessing that ship was bringing
Along her perilous way.

'Twixt sunlight and starlight this morning
I heard his voice at the door;
He came with no word of warning,
Rich, who had left us poor.

And now I stand by the river,
Sedge-warblers chirruping near,
And I bless those wild wings for ever
That wafted that thought of fear.

Fear! the faint heart appalling
With sudden shadows of care,
Thou art but a messenger calling
Souls of the faithful to prayer.



Wedded.



WHEN have I dreamed my brightest dream
of thee?

Not in the garden 'mid the thronging
flowers,

Not in the corn-fields sighing thro' bright hours,
Not by th' unnumbered laughter of the sea,
Nor in the silence of the low tide sands,
Nor when sweet music rang from minstrel bands
Thro' twilight streets ; my brightest dream of thee !

Standing within a churchyard on a hill,
Where full-leaved trees stood back a little space
And left the green graves looking face to face
At the blue sky—sunny, and lone, and still !
Where life seemed hushed away, the listening ear
Caught never voices from the meadows near,
Nor footsteps from the roadway 'neath the hill.

Then in my soul arose a mighty thought :
The myriad dead all living unto God,
The unseen world thick peopled as the sod
Of this earth with her graves ; and bravely brought
Our love to face the calm, eternal range
Of that same world. It paled not, nor did change,
Nor cowered in the lightning of that thought.

I did not test our love by earth alone ;
Not by its daily change, its lessening span,
Its measure as the measure of a man,
Nor by earth's fallen notes attune its tone,
Nor match its glory with her gold grown dim ;
But held it meet to bear the gaze of Him
Who, being Love, should try our love alone.

Now deathless as our souls it binds us twain,
And any foul, false tongue with slanderous word,
Swifter than arrow, sharper than a sword,
May strive against the hallowed bond in vain.
What God *hath* put together nothing can
Make separate, Spirit of ill nor man !
We evermore are one that once were twain.

My dream hath found more bright reality ;
 And now thro' pathways rough or strewn with flowers,
 In the heart's laughter or its sighing hours,
 On life's still shore or by its wildest sea,
 We walk together with close clasping hands
 To join those multitudes, those unseen bands,
 Onward thro' time into eternity !



• The Poet and the River.

 HE rain woke up the river's voice,
The rocks and reeds among;
For whispers there, a murmuring noise
That strengthened into song;
For silence here, a whisper sweet
Along the thirsty marge;
The speedwell bloomed the sound to greet,
The flags grew tall and large.

The river shewed, to one who lay
'Neath branches drooping low,
The blue arch of the summer's day,
The white cloud's drifting snow.
A harmony of many dyes,
Rocks, woods, and flowers unseen,
Perfect it mirrored to his eyes
Below their beechen screen.

“River!” he said, “a mile from hence
Thy banks are flat and bare ;
And yesterday, for blue intense,
Black storm-clouds did prepare,
With gloom and gleam of troubled hours,
A picture for thy tale,
Sung louder while wan lily flowers
Closed in a noonday pale.

“Poet!” he said, “thy numbers hold
Pictured the days of men,
With changes, swift and manifold,
Spread for the gazer’s ken.
But bright thy life, or dark thy life,
Thy own life none may call ;
Oh Poet ! River ! peace and strife,
Shadow and light from all.

“Ye, in your onward flowing, weave
To charm, to awe, to bless,
But do ye joy, or do ye grieve,
We listening cannot guess.

All yesterday the sound of tears
 Seemed in the water's song;
 To-day, seems one who laughs at fears,
 That warbling sweet and strong.

"An hour ago a lay I read,
 Sad as a mourner's moan;
 Now blithe as blackbird overhead,
 The poet lifts his tone;
 Drawing fair heaven unto my feet,
 Instead of shadows drear;
 But that which made his own life sweet
 Or sad, I come not near.

"Up and away among the hills,
 O'er slab and boulder leap,
 And slip thro' moss and bent, the rills
 That urge thy silver sweep,
 River! dews dropped 'neath sun or star,
 In forest, field or dell,
 Unnumbered influences from far
 Throb in thy curve and swell.

“And might we track these all perchance?
Yet Poet heart of man!
The joys that make thy current dance,
Thy sorrows,—few may scan.
Thy words are like a mirror spread,
To paint earth’s various days,
But of thy life is little read
When read are all thy lays.”



Ten Years Ago.



KNOW the day like yesterday,—
Blue sky above the snow ;
We laid my mother in the earth,
Ten years ago.

You stood beside me at the grave,
Beside me at the door,
When first I feared to enter in
Our home, her home no more.

You came and went, unlooked for, bright,
About our house of woe,
Like sunshine on a stormy day,
Ten years ago.

You went and came ; one day you went
And never more you came :
Men said that day by day you rose
To rank and wealth and fame.

That men, with names to you unknown,
 Uttered your name aloud ;
Your step, your voice brought sudden hush
 To an expectant crowd.

Your step, your voice brought time and tune
 Into my life, I know ;
Your name was whispered in my prayers,
 Ten years ago.

Oh not to be ! I saw my fate,
 And humbly dropped it down,
The hope, that bloomed so sweet and pure,
 My spring's white, violet crown ;

And joy a song-bird singing loud,
 I hushed in darkened room,
And broke the gold and silver thread
 I wove on fancy's loom.

Songless, uncrowned, without lament
 I said, "Yea, be it so !"
My life of toil lacked time for tears,
 Ten years ago.

And now you love as once I loved,
What once you scorned, you crave ;
You left me tearful, weak and fond,
You find me cold and brave.

You left me with no word of hope,
To face my life alone !—
The work of days and months and years,
That cannot be undone !

Tho' now you ask me for my love,
Start when I answer, "No,
I cannot find the love you lost
Ten years ago !"



Night and Morning.

"Then were we like unto them that dream."—PSALM CXXVI.



OME, oh dreams! with revelation
Of the Future by the Past!
Bring my spirit renovation,
Be the last time not the last!

"Long ago" we weep in waking;
"Long ago! how long ago!
Since dear friends our hands were taking,
Kisses dropped upon our brow,
And a voice deep music making
Where there is but silence now."

Last times! straight and clearly shewing
Where we turn our waking eyes,
Day and hour and moment knowing
That above our lifetime rise;
Landmarks, like the poplars growing
"Twixt the river and the skies.

But, oh magic dreams ! ye hold us,
And the long pain fades away,
And reviving joys enfold us,
Warm as sunbeams, round us play,
And the pain like strange tales told us
"Is a dream" we dreaming say.

"For ye live we thought departed,"
Say we, dreaming of the true,
"We have gone on broken-hearted,
Nay, we did not wait for you ;
On our lonely path we started,
Yet we find you here anew."

At your coming do we wonder ?
Nay, but at the bygone pain ;
Was it blindness held us sunder ?
Were we ever walking twain ?
Ask we not, nor care to ponder,
It will never come again.

Then with words from bondage leaping,
Longing less to ask than tell,
Say we, thoughts we had in keeping,
Telling all that hath befell
In those hours of lonely weeping,
Since we spoke that word, Farewell!—

Silent are the lips belovéd,
Warm but silent is their kiss;
Something thro' the air hath movéd,
Comes a trouble thro' our bliss,
Touch of day our dream hath provéd;—
Dream destroyer! leave us this!

Vain the prayer, but that sweet vision
Failing, fading in the light,
Hath received and wrought its mission;
Gladder by that lost delight,
Richer by that joy's perdition,
Faith fed by that moment's sight,

We may rise and travel onward,
Fearing not the truth of day,
We may hold in turning sunward
That which is not swept away,
While the lark notes, dropping downward,
Rhyme the child voice in its play ;

Take and give the morning greeting,
Shortly sweet as cuckoo's call,
Feel the hand clasp, hear the fleeting,
Answering chirp where kisses fall,
With a sense of later meeting
Since we parted with them all.

Since we saw each shadow chasing
Each bright light upon the stair,
Since we heard quick footsteps pacing
Overhead where children were ;
Till a silence all embracing
Found one only watching there.

Watching, till God's gift of slumber
Opened gates of dreamland wide,
And the years we may not number,
Which He knoweth must divide,
Vanished, that they might not cumber
Coming joy He doth provide.

For the joy which dreams restore us,
Beacon burns on headlands far;
Waves of life, a stormy chorus,
The reflection break and mar,
And the wild spray drifts before us,
And our brows bent downward are,

Till that troublous tide subsiding
Leaves us on sleep's quiet strand,
Then a ray unbroken, gliding
O'er the silent, shining sand,
By a golden path, is guiding
Pilgrims thro' the shadow land.

And such joy He hath in keeping
Who no sleep nor slumber knows,
Who can give us in our sleeping
Visions that no vigil shews;
Blessings on closed eyelids heaping
Given not to waking woes.

Earnest to our spirits granting
Of the coming of a day,
Onward moving with each slanting,
Sunset beam, each morning ray;
When the seed our tears are planting,
We in sheaves may bear away.

Great things hast Thou done, bestowing
Joy already; joy supreme
By all good gifts here foreshewing.—
When as new-fed southern stream,
Bondage broken, songs are flowing!
“We shall be like them that dream.”



Parting.



WO by a window sit with clasping hands.
A fair young face, where sorrow's shadow
flits

Softly as cloud over a field of corn,
Leaving unchanged its brightness, bent to hear
Fond, farewell words from her whose stedfast eyes
Sees, up the vale of death, the break of dawn
Over eternal hills.

“Farewell,” she said,
“A lifetime lies between us! I shall die
Perchance before you reach your Indian home,
Or else before the tidings, you are safe
In that new home, have reached us waiting here,
And made the daily prayer for those at sea
A pause of thankfulness that hardly finds,
Thro’ sudden change, the shape of words ; or else
Before those boughs, that now are bare in spring,

Are bare in autumn. O my sister-friend!
Friend only but a while ago, but now
My friend and sister, tell me not, that spring
Will call me back to life. I stand as one
Between a calling voice, an echo call.
It is the great new life beyond the grave
That calls me, and the life this side the grave
In spring-time faintly echoes back the call.

Yet it may be that I shall linger here
Till every leaf is perfect on the bough,
Till every flower has blossomed in the grass
And in the garden; but when leaves are red
And yellow in the sunset of the year,
When the last holly-oak flower blooms out atop
The stem, as one who climbed a turret stair,
And ripened acorns and horse-chestnuts fall
On either side the hedge, and thro' the trees
We see, as now, the sky and distant hill,
Blue sapphires set among the tangled boughs,
No voices from the earth will call me back;
And in the silence here, the sound beyond
Unechoed, clear as call across the sea,
Shall bid my soul arise and pass from hence

Like Peter at the delivering angel's voice,
Leaving my chains behind. Weep not, for I,
Like him, shall find some gathered whom I love,
To whom my coming shall bring sudden joy,
New words of praise !

Your brow is smooth, no wave
Of rushing pain has left on your's a mark
Of long endurance ; and your eyes are soft
With dreams of what life holds for you, and bright
With love's first dream fulfilled. I feel that look
In my own eyes when in my hand I hold
New poems, all unread, save one, and that
I know is beautiful. Your hand is firm,
Its lightest touch has strength ! Oh ! you will pass
From youth to life's full prime, and thence to age.
Health seems to bear some like a bounding steed
Along their road, while others wearily,
Plodding on foot, feel every step o' the way.
—Was that repining ? Nay, not of myself,
I thought, in speaking. Rest is now so near
I need no pity. Think not that I grudge
One joy bestowed on you ; I love to look
On joy and strength that might have been my own,
And note it as a pledge of what will be.

We part ! a lifetime lies between us two !
By next year's summer, you will know the sound
Of mighty rivers swollen by the rains,
And melting, mountain snows ; will know the hue,
The matchless green, of rice-fields, and the blaze
Of blossoming pomegranates ; you will watch
The camels pass with their uplifted brows
Soft-footed o'er the glaring plain, the hosts
Of wingéd fires flit thro' the garden gloom,
The new stars float above you ; you will sleep
Unmindful of the punkah's flapping wing,
Or chirping birds that crowd the eaves at dawn.
And lithe, brown hands will braid your golden hair ;
Such hands I can remember hovering round
My mother's silken curls. In future days,
Remembrances like mine will cling about
Your children's thoughts, woke by the full, rich scent
Of casket, sandal-lined, or silver gleam
Of bangles wrought like hoar-frost : treasures then
Decking your English home."—

That April eve,
They parted, lip from lip and hand from hand,
The young bride in the beauty of her strength
And wealth of hope, the other ripe for death.

And when the boughs, that then were bare in spring,
Were bare in autumn, she had passed away ;
But even ere she went the tidings came
O'er sea and land, across one half the world,
That strength and hope were struck down suddenly,
And those it seemed a lifetime should divide,
Parted but for a summer.

So we part
With scarce a farewell on an afternoon,
Thinking to meet tomorrow, and between
Uprises life or death with barring hands
Crying "No more ! no more !" Again we part,
And meet anew ere from our memory fades
The anguish of the last, long, sobbing kiss
We took and gave in parting.



Bell-Ringers.



THE sun went down, the moon rose dim;
It was the last November day;
The white fog left the river's brim
And stole away.

In upper air the moon waxed bright,
The stealthy fog spread thick and wide,
And hid the meadows from her light,
On either side ;

And they, who from their gates looked forth
That evening, saw the hedgerow trees,
Poplar and elm-trees, south and north,
By slow degrees

Grow dim and vanish, as a thought
That only stands on memory's edge
A moment. One looked out and sought
Above the hedge

Of leafless sweet-briar, clasping round
The garden plot he called his own,
The tower that raised o'er level ground
Its ivy crown.

From base to crown an hour ago
Climbed up the sunset's crimson rays,
Now crept and climbed, with wreathings slow,
The silver haze.

"Father!" a widow woman said,
"The ringers will not cross the meads
On such a night, your hands to aid.—
Among the reeds

"They found young Roger drowned last year,
Mazed by the fog that hid from sight
The narrow path. What need to hear
The chimes to-night?

"There's poison in the cold, thick air,
And you are wearied even now;
Come, rest you in the oaken chair!
The faggots glow,

"The boys are laughing ; I am loth
To spare their voices while I spin,
Short days are long without them both.
Father, come in !"

"For forty years, when did I fail,
On Andrew's eve, to ring the chime?
They seem to tell a goodly tale,
In pleasant rhyme,

"For holy men or holy day ;
And when I hear them overhead,
'May no worse tale be mine,' I say,
'When I am dead !'

"Their life was hard, by sword or fire
The good folk suffered, as they tell,
And shall I fear my arm to tire,
Ringing my bell ?"

The old man spoke and called the boys,
His grandsons, from the ruddy hearth ;
"We three will wake a merry noise
'Twixt sky and earth.

"For Giles and Jasper well may bide
At home to-night, they living far ;
Your arms with strength, unripe, untried,
Yet willing are."

Down dropped the music from the height,
And clave the mist with triple call ;
Now faint, now full, to left, to right,
The rise and fall,

Down to the mist, up to the cloud ;
Bravely they rang, with varying power,
The golden heads and grey head bowed
In turn, an hour.

Then, while the old, red belfry thrilled
With dying echoes, o'er the meads
A silence fell, like praying stilled
For one who pleads

Unweariedly, till faith's increase,
Th' ungiven boon in hand before,
Seeing,—the lips in sudden peace
Utter no more.

Glowed, like the wildfire on the fen,
The ringer's lantern ; gleamed, a stone,
From graves anear them. "Help ! good men,
I am alone !"

A voice is crying through the night,
A slender form breaks into view
Beside them, dark through vapour white,
And drenched with dew ;

A stranger, but they led her in.
Wending their way to that low star,
Their cottage hearth light, rest they win ;
"Come you from far?"

They ask the girl. Till then were dry
Her eyes, but now the great tear swells,
And through long sobs they hear her sigh,
"O blessed bells !

"Kind bells, the wanderer's feet to guide !
Sweet bells, through dimness calling clear !
I wandered by the river-side,
How near ! how near !"



In trembling hands her face she hid,
As she had stood in moments past,
Knowing the winding river slid
Beside her fast,

Beneath the mist, but on this hand
Or that, she knew not. Sedges shook
And swayed around her. Did she stand
Beside the brook,

That brought a shallow stream to feed
The greedy river, or beside
That bosom where, with none to heed,
Others had died.

"I heard a moor-hen from the grass
Start up," she said, "and splashing go
Beyond me, but the bird might pass
Each water so,

"I thought, and dared not onward stray
Nor backward turn, for dread and doubt
So held me. Then, not far away,
The bells rang out ;

“And by their sound, to right, I learned,
The river lay, and that my feet
Had paused upon its edge!—I turned
The bells to meet;

“I sprang away from mire and moss,
And found the little path, that lends
A footing sure the meads to cross,
And found you, friends!

“Other dear friends I left, beyond
The bridge in sunlight, safe from harm!
Others would give me greeting fond
In Brookland farm;

“And each may think, she safe will sleep
Beneath a brother's roof to-night.
Oh, but for you, how would they weep
With morning light!”

She clasped the brown hands of the boys,
The old man's rugged hand she kissed;
“God bless each hand that sent a voice
Across the mist!”

Another then took up the tale :

“God bless the will that did withstand
My foolish words, and did not fail
The work in hand !”

The mother and the daughter prayed

In that one blessing. Years have fled
Since “Andrew’s Day,” when, the lost maid
Homeward they led ;

Years that have passed with life’s quick change
Over those levels, sweeping down
Poplar and willow, elm and grange ;
Raising a town,

Where the streets lengthen, year by year,
And spires spring up, and whiffs of steam
Fly o’er the meads ; and none may hear
The bittern scream,

Nor pluck the bog-bean from the fen,
And water-violet, as of old ;
But all the sounds of busy men
Wax manifold.

There, while the daylight lingers yet,
Lamps star the road with long array,
Where once the wanderer wellnigh met
Death on her way.

No wandering steps where mightier rolls
The river, serving human will;
But lost from light, how many souls
May wander still!

“Oh long lost pathway! who may teach
Their feet to find, and walk therein?
Poor wanderers! whom we cannot reach
Where mists of Sin,

“And Falsehood, with their poisoned breath,
Shut earthly light and heaven away;
Through miry ways that lead to death
Blinded they stray!

“Few hearts are brave, few steps are sure,
To seek them out, and lead them home.
Oh Christ! How long shall night endure?
Thy kingdom come!



“Yet—if too late for help, for prayer
Too late, at morning they be found,
Souls, that should be in dwellings fair,
In evil drowned;

“How shall we meet the Day of God
Knowing we sat in homes below,
Safe in the light, while others trod
To utter woe?”

So, in that town, a sad heart cried,
Thinking of others. With this tale
Of bygone days, a voice replied
To still its wail.

Saying moreover, “Let us fear
To fail the work we *have* in hand;
Beyond the end that doth appear,
It may expand,

And touch some need, far off, unknown;
Let us be faithful to the hour;
The deed, that is in weakness sown,
May rise in power. .

To weary hands of age that night,
To boys' young hands, did work belong
They knew not, while they rang aright
The bells' clear song.

"Ring out all utterance of pure lives,"
The voice went on, "All service true!
Any good deed with evil strives!
Ring, ever new,

"Faith, Love, and Hope, with threefold cry;
From brink of hell, from darkness won,
The lost may follow! Night goes by,
Ring on! ring on!"



Constance.

PART I.

“H, take me not away across the water!”
The maiden Constance of her friends
implored,
While, day by day, they earnestly besought her,
With loving gesture and with pleading word.

“Too long,” they said, “your life has lacked some
vigour,
Come, try with us th’ untried charm of change,
Escaping, too, approaching winter’s rigour
In lands where all is bright and fair and strange.”

She said “Th’ unbroken course of my existence,
The life that seems like song too often heard,
Is so to you who hear it at a distance,
But not to me, knowing each separate word.

"I prize no changes ; in the garden laurel
I look to find the same nests, year by year,
And every spring, the blue-bells and wood-sorrel
In the same haunts, their beauty has made dear.

"I would not move the pictures from their places
Where they have watched me from my childhood's days,
Nor miss the humblest of the homely faces
That meet me in the house or garden ways."

They said, "What tho' no mists at eve or morning
Rise from the river to this windy height,
Winter leaps forth ere half its word of warning
Autumn has uttered ; winter in a night !

"Come, where bright cities lie in purple hollows,
And terraced gardens drop to sunny seas ;
The swift has flown, and soon will fly the swallows,
Good augurs for us,—we will follow these !

"And there, while snow about your hillside lingers,
Among the budding vines the spring wind sighs,
And, gathering violets, your busy fingers
Shall stir to flight a thousand butterflies.



“You, on your steed o’er the Campagna leaping,
 Shall long for new words that may name the hue,
 The wondrous green, from height to hollowsweeping,
 The sky, the hills, the ocean’s wealth of blue.

“Do you not long to hear the mystic, soaring,
 Melting and mingling voices, in that dome
 That lifts a vault like heaven, for men’s adoring?
 Would you not see a brilliant night in Rome

“Closing glad holiday? when lamps are burning,
 And thousands breathless watch in light unfold
 That mighty pile; first silver clear, then turning
 Suddenly to a blaze of molten gold.

“And forms of vaster majesty and brightness
 Than ever northern art, from dreamland, won,
 Wait you, immortal, in a lustrous whiteness,
 Or glow in answer to their southern sun.”

She said, “To-day across the fern and heather
 Against the wind our steeds went merrily,
 And their sharp footfalls in the frosty weather,
 On sunny roads, good music is to me.

“Up to its sapphire depths, our eyes beguiling,
The winter sky broods o’er the snowy steep
Beautiful as a face that watches, smiling,
The beauty of another’s face asleep.

“And sculptor’s hands work not so fair a wonder
As winds, that drift the snow o’er bough and brake,
Pink in the morning light, the hollows under
Holding blue shadows. Gladly for the sake

“Of pines and storm winds chanting midnight
choral,
I would forego the sweetest anthems sung;
For the wild gleaming of our lights auroral,
The myriad lamps on festal evenings hung.”

Back came persuasion new, in accents bolder,
“Why will you waste your beauty year by year?
Beside your brother’s hearth, grow sterner, colder?
No love, but his, holding your beauty dear.”

No love! before the word her cheek is burning,
Her eyes grow still, and holy as the stars,
Nor the relentless voices, in returning,
The unseen current of remembrance mars.



Beneath her eyes and hand, a book is lying,
 Where hand not hers has written, name and year;
 She hears a voice beside her, "Hours are flying,
 Far will that year seem,—I returning here.

Oh for a constant heart! all changes meeting
 Unmoved, thro' life where little rests the same.
 'What's in a name?' one says, but for my greeting,
 A nobler name than any, is your name."

Dark words to others; nor are others seeing
 Now, as she sees, the branches wave in time,
 The passing swallows sink and soar, as being
 Held in the music of an outread rhyme,

Whose echo haunts for her the room and garden,
 And gazing round about her dwelling-place,
 Proudly, as one of many treasures warden,
 She thinks, "A year has passed and left no trace.

"No tree is felled, no flower has failed in blowing;
 The lights and shadows fall on field and lawn,
 No shadow newly shaped by young boughs growing,
 No lights made broader by a shade withdrawn.

Within doors, little fear of changes coming;
My lonely dove I give no other mate,
Myrtle and orange-tree in fruit or blooming
Are evergreen, and I unchanging wait,

True to my name!" A startled glance, a waking,
Her own name called dispels her reverie,
Last words' entreaty, thro' the farewells breaking,
Pray her to ponder well and wiser be.

Save one who marks the page her hand is pressing,
And notes the writing, to her eye well known;
An eye that little needs the mouth's confessing,
Quick, as a bird's to spy the wheat new-sown.

A letter, to her girl friend on the morrow,
She writes, with skill its real errand hides,
Some flowers she sends, an old song she would
borrow,
And claim her guidance for some woodland rides.

Her husband and herself once more were seeking
The beauties of a home unseen for years,
How often in the south, her cousin speaking
Of all those beauties, dimmed her eyes with tears!

He, on his journey to Ionian islands,
 Some days had spent with them, but careless praise
 Gave even to fair Florence ; England's Highlands
 Had fairer scenes for him, and happier days.

"But when to us, again comes Maurice, bringing
 A new-made bride, to northern sunlight strange,
 New gems on memory's thread he will be stringing,
 For men," she wrote, "are soon a prey to change.

"These are his words : 'Before another meeting,
 I mean a priceless heart to woo and win ;
 Past joys are like a vanquished host retreating,
 Because new hopes are swiftly marching in.'"

Poor eyes, so changed ! uplooking from your reading,
 Asking the meaning of the silver chime
 That breaks the silence, noonday numbers leading
 The roving senses back to meted time.

So long, so very long, it seems since morning,
 So long since first she touched each given flower,
 Frail, waxen blossom, still her belt adorning,
 You have not faded in this long-lived hour !

Yon bough of elm, she marked this morning, amber
 Among green leaves, no new leaf feeds the flame
Kindled by autumn's hand, around her chamber,
 In field, in garden, all things are the same ;

Yet summer suddenly seems gone, and faster
 Than her far flight stern winter coming on,
The gorgeous blooms of dahlia and of aster
 Glow with sad sunset hues of fair days gone.

Less sweet in blossoming than sad in falling,
 On the long spray, the last, red roses bow,
This morning, all blithe memories recalling,
 She greeted them, she gives them pity now.

Alas ! for her a glory has departed,
 Within, without, departed from her home ;
" I sought not change," she murmurs woful-hearted,
 " I have been constant, yet a change has come."

PART II.

She gathered changes round her day by day,
 Saying, "Forgive me, brother! I withheld
 Consent to all you would, now take away
 Whate'er you will." Straightway, a copse was
 felled

That shut long wheatfields out from ripening light;
 Smiling, she watched the dumb axe fall, afar,
 On bole and branch, and heard the lagging flight
 Of sound and echo after; to debar

Swift hands from rending glossy wreaths that made
 The ploughman's cottage pleasant to behold,
 No word she utters now, tho', in their shade,
 A multitude of birds had homes of old.

No more the rain, on stormy day or night,
 Should drop thro' broken roofs. Above the trees
 A church spire rose, like lily blossom white,
 And chiming voices filled the summer breeze,

Where once a feeble bell's sad monotone
Rung from the gable. "Each year from the sod,"
She said, "new graves will swell; each face unknown
May be to us a messenger from God,

"To fill some empty places He foreknows;
Now will I welcome, where I stood aloof,
All outstretched hands, for swift the green weed
grows
Upon untrodden pathways. 'Neath our roof,

Kind brother! gather in what friends you will."—
Unwonted laughter rang about the place
And crossed the garden, sunny, broad and still,
And the lake shrined in silver many a face

Below the lily cups, with turquoise set
Of blue forget-me-not, and pearl-white flowers
Of glittering crowfoot. Did one there regret
Her own lost, dreamy smile of lonely hours?

Not so, tho' not the picture there alone
Told her of change, even the careless eyes
Of her young brother noted something gone,
A starlight waning in the morning skies;

And said, "You, with the year, have fairer grown,
 My sister Constance!" "Fairer, that is strange,"
 She communed with herself; "I have but shown
 How cheek and brow must bear the doom of
 change."

She said, "I have grown older with the year,
 Keen-sighted brother!" And the year again
 Passed from its prime, and daily one might hear
 New voices in the woods, and mark the stain

On fallen leaves, where, in a blaze of gold
 With scarlet, startled eye, the pheasant fell,
 Or the blue-wingéd jay, tell-tale too bold
 With warning cry for others; and farewell

The wheatear whistled, and at night the quails
 With triple note their southward flight betrayed,
 The woodcock hurried down with northern gales
 From freezing seas, and in fresh plumes arrayed,

Bright with all rainbow hues, the mallard sought
 His wonted haunt beside the lake once more;
 Bird rovers went and came, but no day brought,
 Winter or summer, from a southern shore

Maurice, a greeting for his bride to win ;
His lady cousin, every season found,
With others in her train, by lake or linn,
In lighted hall, or garden's scented bound ;

But never passed the lips, or met the ear
Of the young hostess, utterance of his name.
So months went by and made another year,
Winter and summer, and a new year came.

PART III.

Spring ! when the world seems rich in sweet returns ;
 The last year's clouds surging across the blue
 Of April skies, and primroses and ferns,
 Windflowers and blackthorn, to their places true.

Uprising lily-leaves in folded scroll
 Above the lake, and reeds in shining sheaves ;
 From topmost bough down to the green-fringed bole,
 Leaf beside leaf renewing last year's leaves.

Bird voices thro' the bloom of larch and elm
 Ring near and far the notes of all the years,
 "Yet change and change thro' all this wide, bright
 realm,"
 Said Constance, gathering violets, "no one hears

"The same birds singing everywhere, some died
 In cruel snowstorms even in the south,
 And those that fill the chorus, last year cried
 For food, unfledged, with gaping, songless mouth.

And darling flowers ! with wellknown lips and eyes,

 You sit on thrones that last year's beauties owned,
With dew and sunlight they, in selfsame wise,
 For gold and diamond, they were daily crowned.

And could we see the ages, as we see

 The circled year, the law of growth and change,
That need must be with growth, not in the tree
 Alone, but in the star-worlds, thro' mountain range,

And down among the valleys and the hills

 Of ocean beds, onward with progress sure,
We should behold, working for Him Who wills,
 The God, who only changeless doth endure ;

The love, we must feel after till we find,

 With restless foot and groping hand, unstayed ;
But finding rest, and call no change unkind
 That has been, from none coming shrink afraid.

I dreaded once all change, I would not set

 A new chord to the next line of the song ;
My life lost harmony, until I met
 Change, thro' my tears ; the same notes may
 belong

“To death-knells tolling, songs of life pass on
 From chord to chord.” A footfall that was far,
 Then faded on the grass, unheard hath won
 Her violet nook. She clasps her flowers to bar

Her hands, one moment, from each outstretched
 hand ;

Then on her lips, unborn, a proud word dies,
 As, her name’s meaning, she reads plain and grand,
 In the long gaze of those unchanged eyes,

Before the name finds utterance ; ’neath that gaze
 Breaks up and vanishes the subtle weft
 Woven by doubt, as in the sun the haze
 That hid the wellknown mountains.—What is left

Still to make plain? Two written lines : “Before
 Another meeting I will seek and win
 A priceless heart.” “On the Italian shore,
 I left my cousin, saying, it were sin

To risk her fragile health in northern air ;
 She knew my letters to Ferrara went,
 She knew two years might bring me fortunes fair,
 To seek you in the north was my intent,

And not to see her face again till so

I read my fate in yours. I keep my vow,
This evening we shall meet." "She wrought me
woe,"

Said Constance, "deep and bitter! How my
brow

"Has burned beneath cool flowers, has ached while
rife

Were songs and laughter! Why was this thing
done?"

"Because she planned and longed so sweet a wife
Should be by brother, not by cousin, won.

"Her brother, whose old heritage for miles
Sweeps over moor and mountain. Better fate
For you to reign there than, from southern isles,
For my slow coming, she would say, to wait.

"Forgive her! for she loves you, though with love
As ruthless as the gardener's hand that bends
The peach tree to a pattern, while she strove
To make your life a servant to her ends.

“Rule, is her ruling passion.” “Now the skein
Runs smooth from tangle! I recall, and see
Her meetings and her greetings planned in vain,
Books, roses, praises flung away on me!

“Ask me not, to forgive, till I forget
A little of the pain, her gliding pen
Spread in one moment thro’ two years; and yet
She would not drop poison in streams, where men

“Might drink and die, or live in anguish. Truce
To troubled memories! Did you mark the waste
Below the road is turned to human use?
Barley is sown there. No, you came in haste.

“But much will prove how, little rests the same,
(Your words,) being changed since that first day
in spring
Four years ago, when first you hither came;
My name no more is writ on everything.”

They passed beyond the trellis of the wood,
They looked across the garden to the hills,
So on a day, four years gone by, they stood;
Up the long valley, sigh of west wind thrills.

The cuckoos call from bough to bough, the land
 Glows amethyst and golden, thousand sprays
New-budded, twined to one far glory, stand
 Against the purple hollows. In amaze

She turned and looked at him.—“What have I said?
 My name to be inscribed on all things, mine!
When God’s name, Love, life-working, is pourtrayed
 By Life, of Love the sacrament and sign.

“Life in each breaking bud, each bloom with seed
 Held in its lap, life in nests overhead;
Life in the human tide, gathering in speed
 That so the whole earth may be overspread.

I to record the trivial changes wrought
 By our poor hands! counting the fields new-tilled,
A score of new roofs, briars pruned and taught
 To blossom, till their cups drop overfilled!

Pink tufts of Alpine rose, set in the place
 Where once the pool lay dark beneath the sun!
Talking as if ’twere ours to change the face
 Of God’s creation, or if left undone

“These little works, complacent we might say,
 No change beset the earth ; as well, the child
 May boast, he checks the river, when at play
 He stays one tiny rill, with pebbles piled.

“God plants—a new star in the heavenly field !
 He builds—new barriers for retreating seas !
 He gives to men knowledge that unrevealed
 Waited thro’ centuries ; while His decrees

“Unfold from age to age, we toil to write,
 Or breathless read, some history of the world,
 Then, suddenly, when delvers bring to light
 Records on rocks, new ages lie unfurled

“Beyond our dimmest thought of eldest time !
 Now, Maurice, look upon me ! changed am I.
 My thoughts ran in the fields, nor cared to climb,
 As now, those upper heights, four years gone by.

“I sat and held Life’s book with leaf unturned,
 Reading one page ; meanwhile th’ unpausing day
 Went westward, faded : when new light returned
 I read that page no more,—and skies were gray.

"The book seemed long, until I lent an ear
To lives of others, passer-by or friend,
Saying no more, 'be still, I cannot hear!
With this sweet rhyme, no outer words can
blend.'

"True, on my page to-day, the old glad words
Have been repeated, but am I for you
The Constance that indeed you sought?"—The
birds,
All the long pause he made, pierced through
and through

With sweet, persistent askings like her own;
To which at last he answered: "Not the same
I find you here, Flower of the soul! full-blown,
I left in bud, and wearing your fair name

"More nobly, 'To your noble self be true,
And to God's ripening light, not true to me,
Only to me be true!' parting from you,
My heart said, when I asked your constancy.



“True life is linked with change. We shall be
changed

In the new life beyond the grave, and still
Love shall abide, so nothing be estranged.—

See, I too leave the field and climb the hill

“To meet your thoughts there. Change were
endless loss

If love were not supreme ; as key-note strong
Heard in its silence, felt after across

The rush of varied notes, that shape a song.

“God’s voice is Love ! echoed by love below,

If men will so unfalteringly fulfil

His law, Who bade them, love, that all might
know

He walked on earth, He loved us, man, and still

“Was not less, God !—If love, if echoes fail,

Echoes will fail at times, we know not why,
Only the heart that lifts too loud a wail

Can miss the Greater Voice that can not die.

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“And we miss now nor Voice, nor echo sweet,
Each gives and hears. We will not ask to stand
Statues among life's changes. Let us meet
All of them, Constance, walking hand in hand !”

They crossed the lawns, they parted on the way,
She whispering last, “He lived with us, doth live !
Let not one echo fail, not one to-day ;
Give her my love, your cousin.—I forgive !”



Autumn.



THRO' lessening days and lengthening
eves,
She listened to the autumn blast,
The rustle of the changing leaves,
But never sighed for summer past.

She heard the mist break into rain,
That only fed the swift decay
Of quivering leaves, nor brought again,
As once, new life from root to spray.

She upward held her stedfast head,
"Is summer past? I mourn not now;
The buds are on the bough," she said,
"The buds are on the bough!"

The Virgin creeper bared the wall,
Her flaming garlands all unstrung,
And piercing keen the robin's call,
Across the tangled rose-beds rung.

'Neath chestnut bough a heap of gold,
A ruddy drift by sycamore,
For all the beauties manifold,
That graced the woodland slopes no more.

She onward walked with stedfast tread,
"Is summer past? I mourn not now;
The buds are on the bough," she said,
"The buds are on the bough!"

Oh woman! grey lines streak thy hair,
Tears early shed have dimmed thine eye,
A faded hue supplants the fair
Bloom, that with May-bloom once could vie;

Full sweetness from thy voice hath gone,
Gone with the thrush and blackbird's lay,
And thou, whose path was never lone,
Hast journeyed lonely many a day.

But there is hope, but there is light,
So holy on thy lip and brow,
We may but whisper at the sight,
“The buds are on the bough!”

We cannot mourn thy summer past,
Thou bearest tokens of a spring,
That waits afar, but comes at last,
To wake all buds to blossoming.



In the Fields.



FAIN would write a song in the fields,
But it does not come at my will,
For the wind goes wandering round
and round,
Never a moment still ;

Singing a song of its own with a sigh,
And a sudden laughing now,
And a whispered sound that is almost a word,
As it flutters about my brow.

The poplars bow in silver light,
And red the oak shoots glow,
And golden green after summer rain,
The uplands round me show.



Dark shadows lie beside the tree,
Where the kine stand white and red,
With drooping foreheads and restless tails;
A wood-pigeon overhead

Gives to the silent fir a voice,
And swift thro' the feathery grass,
A covey of partridges, young and old,
With heads quick nodding, pass.

Up and down, like a singer's notes,
The merry butterflies go,
The skylark is far and the blackbird is near,
And the swallows dart to and fro;

And over all the clouds go by
In Whitsun garments white;
There is beauty a-wing on every hand,
But my song it flows not right.

And yet how many songs are made,
To the tune of busy feet;
When the summer sun is answered back
By the glare of a London street.

"The book seemed long, until I lent an ear
To lives of others, passer-by or friend,
Saying no more, 'be still, I cannot hear!
With this sweet rhyme, no outer words can
blend.'

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Can miss the Greater Voice that can not die.

Out of Sight.



LIKE graves beneath the feet,
Where men from street to street,
Through some neglected graveyard
pass ;
Names footworn from the stone,
And nameless turfs o'ergrown
With the broad dock-leaf and rank grass ;

So are the many woes,
No wailing words disclose ;
They lie about our path unnamed, unknown.
We with quick step go by,
Careful or careless eye,
And sigh for sorrows that we call our own.

Like nests built overhead,
Above the paths we tread,
Where spring-tide boughs expand their shadowy
wings,
Amid the chestnut blooms,
And tossing lilac plumes .
Hidden, tho' lying near, fair treasured things !

So are the many joys,
That without sound or noise
Enrich the world, and make life's memories dear ;
Or if they wake to song,
We know not that for long
The singer, silent there, was dwelling near.

Oh leisure of the heart !
Strange lore thou dost impart,
The old man lingering by the graveyard wall,
Whose working days are o'er,
Remembering days of yore,
Many a nameless grave by name can call.

And children who may lie,
While sunny hours go by,
Watching the flight of cloud, and bee, and bird,
With heart and brain at rest,
They know the hidden nest,
And saw the blossoms fall when young wings stirred.

Oh leisure of the heart!
Perchance the better part,
The better knowledge they have sought and won,
Who sit with watchful eye,
While others toiling nigh,
Cry out, "Thou leavest me to serve alone!"



The Message of the Flowers.

“One woman dying of an incurable complaint, begged me to leave the primroses beside her ; she said they looked so pure, they made her think of heaven.”—*Letter from a District Visitor.*



HE turned, and saw them on her pillow
lying,
The fair, fresh primroses in all their
bloom ;

She, the pale woman, pale with suffering, lying
In the grey shadow of a London room.

Little she knew of forest paths and meadows,
Little of hedgerow flowers and grassy ways,
Of April's golden green, and purple shadows,—
Tree shadows growing with the growing sprays.

Little she knew of winds with many voices,
Tuned by the branches which they sway and
swing,
Sweetened by breadth of cowslip bloom, where poises
Straight overhead, the skylark on the wing.

She had loved flowers in the city planted,
 Primroses blowing at her window's height,
 That caught and kept a golden sunbeam slanted
 Down the long street an hour before the night.

She had heard voices in the showers falling,
 Ringing sharp music on the dusty stones,
 And somewhere out of sight a caged bird calling,
 Taking at cloudy noon its sunset tones.

But now fresh plucked from banks beside the river,
 A blooming handful loving hands had brought,
 And the glad thanks gave blessing to the giver,—
 Thanks for the love beside the gift it brought.

Then came fond praises of the sweet gift given,
 And tears of longing in the patient eye :
 "So fair, so pure, they make me think of heaven ;
 Oh, leave them here beside me where I lie !"

"They make me think of heaven," she still repeated,
 As if an angel stood within her gaze,
 And yet that loving gaze but flowers greeted,
 Born to make sweet a few short April days.

Perfect they lay before her in their meekness,
Each sunbeam-tinted blossom on its stem,
Pure without pallor, tender without weakness,
And dreams of heavenly beauty came with them.

Oh! better than to bask beneath the willow,
And give their fragrance to the flying breeze,
Was it to brighten there a mourner's pillow,
And bring glad thoughts to sorrow and disease!

They faded in few days, altho' outstaying
The life on earth that they had come to bless;
None missed them by the river willows straying,
For there were thousands in like loveliness.

But many a soul endowed with utterance fervent,
Working in love throughout a long life's hours,
Would fain have told to serve a fellow-servant,
And failed to tell the message of the flowers.

Would tearful, weary eyes have fain uplifted,
And turned earth-dazzled eyes from earthly snares;
Would fain have seen from chaff the good grain sifted,
And the green spreading wheat-fields cleared
from tares.

Warning and prayer with daily zeal repeating,
 Sinners uplifting seventy times and seven ;
But the sweet silent flowers could win a greeting
 Not won by words,—“They make me think of
 heaven.”



Mahanaim.

"Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. . . . and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."—GEN. xxxii. (*1st Lesson for the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels.*)



ALLED forth by God, he went his way,
Returning to his father's land ;
Dangers foreseen before him lay,
Troubles on every hand.

The way prepared by God he went,
Not on to regions fair and new ;
Hebron he sought and Isaac's tent,—
Dread Edom's land in view.

"The people of the East" might dwell
On sunny plains in wealthy ease,
With herds at rest beside the well ;
He turned not back to these.

There was a dwelling-place on earth,
Marked by his father's God for him;
There was a voice that cried "Come forth!"
Clear, through sleep's dreaming dim.

He rose and went. His face was set
To meet the foe long dreaded most;
And lo! upon that road he met
Angels, a glorious host.

Beautiful, as the golden light
That flashes in the eastern sky,
They rose before him, in their might
And radiant panoply.

Then faint not, halt not on thy way:
If thy way be God's way for thee,
Angels shall meet thee in the day
Thou fearedst most to see.

Say not, "I know what lies before,—
The weary sand, the rocky steep,
The foes in wait to wound me sore,
The watches I must keep

“From evening star to morning star,
The aching longing in my breast,
Ere I shall see the land afar,
And find a place to rest.”

What know'st thou? Jacob could foretell
His road by Jordan,—Jabbok's ford,
And tents, where sons of Ishmael
And Esau drew the sword.

But one place still remained unknown—
Unnamed, till there his feet had trod,
Where to his wondering gaze was shown
The angel host of God!





NOTES.



NOTES.

Page 14, line 12.

The white lily of a blameless life.

"Wearing the white flower of a blameless life
Before a thousand peering littleness
In that fierce light that beats upon a throne,
And blackens every blot."

TENNYSON. *Dedication of the Idylls of the King.*

Page 17, line 20.

Men who had loved his name as boys.

Vide SOUTHEY'S *Life of Nelson*, chap. II.

Page 18, line 6.

Like his brave coxswain.

John Sykes, at the blockade of Cadiz, 1797.

Page 18, line 10.

The sword of his inheritance.

In the expedition against Teneriffe and Santa Cruz, Nelson, in the act of stepping out of the boat, received a shot through the right elbow, and fell; but as he fell he caught the sword, which he had just drawn, in his left hand, determined never to part with it while he lived; for it had belonged to his uncle, Captain Suckling, and he valued it like a relic."—SOUTHEY'S *Life of Nelson*.

Page 18, line 16.

A woman waiting thro' the night.

Mrs. Freemantle, whose husband commanded the "Seahorse," and was on shore leading the night attack on Santa Cruz.

Page 18, line 21.

The cabin boy.

Cloudesley Shovel, afterwards admiral of the fleet, in 1705.

Page 19, line 13.

Drake, the skipper's boy, of whom 'tis read, etc.

FULLER'S *History of the Worthies of England*.

Page 25, line 11.

Royal Margaret.

Sister of Edgar Atheling; married Malcolm III. of Scotland, 1067.

Page 31, lines 12, 13.

*But for the music fraught with memories
And hopes of home and heaven.*

The Sirens sought to lure the Argonauts to their shore with their music, but Orpheus sang of the land to which they were returning with surpassing skill and sweetness, so that they passed on unharmed.

Page 36, line 16.

With prows at either end.

"The Malayan canoe is so constructed as to proceed with either end foremost; thus elucidating an observation made by Pliny eighteen hundred years ago, that the ships to the west of Taprobane 'had prows at either end.'"—KINGSTON'S *Book of Boats*.

Page 41, line 4.

The avenues of chestnuts.

Around Kensington Palace.

Page 42, line 4.

The Thracian gladiator.

Spartacus, B.C. 73.

Page 45, lines 8, 9.

On whose young boughs once hung bright plum'd birds.

That part of St. James's Park called, the Bird-cage Walk, was a favourite resort of Charles II. He caused it to be planted with trees, on which birds in cages were hung.

Page 46, line 24.

And 'mid the storm-winds where two oceans meet.

Off Cape Horn, a region notable for storms.

Page 51, line 13.

The Sargasso's yellow field.

The Gulf weed (*Fucus natans*) covers some portions of the Atlantic with a dense mass of vegetation.

Page 51, line 14.

And isle whose peak soars 'mid the upper clouds.

Teneriffe, situated in one of the largest of the Canary islands.

Page 51, line 20.

Sea-nettles.

The sailor's name for the *Medusæ*; a species of jelly-fish, swarms of which cover the sea for many leagues.

Page 65, line 24.

The better country.

"But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly."—HEB. xi. 16.

Page 82, line 10.

The long coo-ee.

The peculiar cry of the natives of Australia, by which they can make themselves heard at an immense distance.

• Page 85, line 6.

Th' unnumbered laughter of the sea.

Κυμάτων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα.—ÆSCH. *Prom.* 89.

Page 146.

This and the two following poems have appeared before in Magazines.





